

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION]

[IN RESERVE.]

No. 584.—VOL. XXIII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 11, 1874.

[PRICE ONE PENNY]



[MARK LANGTON'S SUSPICIONS.]

SILVERSTONE'S HEIR; OR, THE MYSTERY OF BLACKROCK TOWER.

CHAPTER IV.

Oh, Heav'n, that lends me life,
Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness.

Shakespeare.

This morning following the search for Stanhope Bainbridge dawned gloomily enough upon the occupants of Silverstone Hall.

Exactly at eight o'clock the night preceding there drove up to the old manor-house a close-covered carriage drawn by two chestnut-coloured horses. This arrival was evidently unexpected, and created no small stir among the servants, who came rushing out into the spacious courtyard to offer their services. But the driver, a grim-looking man, waved them gruffly off, and, leaping from his seat with more agility than might have been expected, opened the carriage door himself, and assisted the occupant to alight.

This was Miss Lilian St. Clair, a young lady of great personal beauty, a frequent visitor at the Hall, and a niece of the squire's by marriage.

Hardly had Miss St. Clair been ushered into the old building than Mark Langton made his appearance. He had come to interview Mr. Bainbridge, but, on being informed twenty minutes later that such was at present out of the question, he resolved to await a more fitting opportunity.

"It is no matter," he said to the servant; "my business is good at any time; I'll just bide here till morning. I suppose you have a bed to spare?"

"Oh, yes," answered the man, cheerily, "we have always a bed and a meal too for Mr. Langton. But is it not dreadful, this strange disappearance of Mr. Stanhope?"

"Ay, ay," said the jewel-vendor, sadly; "it was the way his uncle went before him, and that now is over twenty years ago. But there was as much difference between Stanhope and his uncle Arkright as there is between daylight and darkness."

The servant was becoming interested, and his eyes sparkled with curiosity as he asked:

"Then you have seen the uncle, Mr. Langton?"

"Seen him!" ejaculated Langton, "ay, indeed, many a time. He was a little man, not more than five foot four, with hair and eyes as black as coals. But he wasn't a Bainbridge, though. He had a foreign appearance. But there," restraining himself, "it is no use talking of him now: he is gone, and so, I fear, is also poor Mr. Stanhope."

Tears sprang into the servant's eyes at the words, for he loved Stanhope Bainbridge as ardently as ever servant loved master.

"Alas!" he answered, huskily, "I fear it is so. But come, Mr. Langton, you must be fatigued after your journey;" and he led the old jewel-vendor into the servants' hall, where he soon placed a substantial supper before him.

That night Mark Langton slept at the manor-house.

In the morning at the breakfast-table were assembled Squire Bainbridge, his niece Lilian St. Clair, and Ronald Hamilton. The latter had been prevailed on by Mr. Bainbridge to stay over night. It can be easily imagined how the squire felt at the loss of his son. He had passed a sleepless time and looked at least ten years older than the previous morning. Miss St. Clair, when she saw Stanhope's chair empty, could not restrain her emotions, but gave way to a passionate flood of tears. Even Ronald Hamilton felt a great lump rising in his throat when he thought of the misery which had so unexpectedly fallen on Silverstone. The meal was more a form than a reality; none of them felt an inclination to eat, and for some time a deep and sorrowful silence prevailed.

At length Mr. Hamilton, feeling that to allow such things to continue longer would only result in the illness of one or both of his friends, resolved to make an effort to engage them in conversation.

"Do you intend, sir," he said, addressing the squire, "to make any farther inquiries?"

"I think it would be useless," replied Mr. Bain-

bridge, despairingly. "The circumstances that attended our search yesterday preclude all hope that further inquiry would have a more satisfactory result."

Tears sprang into his eyes as he said it, but with a powerful effort of his will he controlled them.

"The conclusion may be rather hasty," Ronald replied, with some degree of encouragement. "There is one quarter still left open from which we may possibly glean some information."

The dull, listless despair which overclouded Adam Bainbridge's face a moment before now gave way to a momentary gleam of hope.

"Speak," he cried, eagerly. "If you can offer any means of throwing a light on the disappearance of my poor boy do so."

"Well," Ronald replied, thus urged, "I would suggest we send over a messenger at once to Blackrock."

"I did not think of that," said Adam Bainbridge, musingly. "Do you really think that the doctor has more knowledge than other people?"

"If you mean supernatural knowledge I am no believer in it. But, without going farther into that, is there not a chance that he might in a perfectly natural way have come into possession of some information about Stanhope that no one else has?"

"I fear not," said Mr. Bainbridge, sadly, "for as far as I am aware they have never even spoken to each other, and I can think of no reason that would have taken Stanhope to Blackrock."

"The reason I made the suggestion is that Dr. Philander is much addicted to boating, and I fancied that if he had been out yesterday morning he might possibly have dropped on something that would afford us some additional clue."

"But if that had been the case," said the squire, "we should in all likelihood have heard from him before."

"But there is Mark Langton," interposed Lilian St. Clair. "He arrived here last evening, and I am informed he came direct from Blackrock. We can soon ask him, however, for he stayed over night and I don't think he has gone yet."

"We will send for him at once," said Mr. Bainbridge, "and hear what he has to say."

A servant now entered at a summons from the squire, and was desired to conduct Mark Langton up.

The man was not more than a couple of minutes away when the old jewel-vendor entered the room.

"You were at Blackrock yesterday, I hear," said Adam Bainbridge, scanning the old hawker narrowly.

"Yes, squire," replied Mark, bowing deferentially. "I was there yesterday with a few articles for Doctor Philander, which he had commissioned me to purchase for him."

"I presume you have no information of Mr. Stanhope or you would have mentioned it last night?" said Mr. Bainbridge.

His manner was eager, almost excited as he asked the question.

"None at all, sir," replied Mark, sighing deeply.

At this instant a servant hastily entered and handed a letter to the squire, which evidently threw him into a state of great excitement.

"Where did you get this?" he hastily demanded, turning with a pallid face to the servant.

"I found it lying in the hall," the man replied.

"You may go," his master said, with an excited wave of his hand, and the servant, obeying the order, bowed and passed out of the room.

Both Lilian and Ronald had risen to their feet.

"Oh, what is the matter, sir?" cried Miss St. Clair, approaching the old squire sympathetically. "You seem strangely agitated."

"You shall soon know," replied Mr. Bainbridge, as he tore open the letter with trembling fingers and glanced over its contents.

"Read that—read it aloud," he cried, handing it over to Mr. Hamilton. "Oh, the ungrateful fellow, to use me in this manner. He must be mad—mad, for Stanhope in his senses could never have done it."

Mr. Hamilton, quite as much agitated as the squire, after an almost superhuman effort to control his feelings, read the letter aloud. It ran as follows:

"Sir,—When you receive this I shall have far away from Silverstone. Since leave you I have acquired a knowledge of certain circumstances of which before I was entirely ignorant, and this knowledge alone unhappily compels me to pursue the course I have taken. If you knew all you would be aware that it was for your sake as much as—ever more than—for my own. Farewell! The time will come when you shall hear from me."

STANHOPE."

"This is most unaccountable and mysterious," said Ronald Hamilton, when he had finished reading the letter. "How has this note been brought here?"

"You heard what the servant said?"

"Of course, and I have no reason to doubt that he told the truth; but still the letter could not come without hands. Some one has brought it; that is evident. Now, if we could only discover who that one was, we might speedily unravel the mystery. But let us be hopeful—Stanhope is alive."

"Thank Heaven!" cried the old squire, fervently, while tears of joy rolled down his furrowed cheeks. "I have reason to be thankful. My poor boy still lives."

"Had we not better summon all the servants and see if any of them can throw a light on the matter?" said Ronald Hamilton.

"Yes, yes! the sooner the better," returned Adam, brushing the evidences of his emotion from his face. "Surely some one must have seen the bearer of that unaccountable letter."

The retainers of the old manor were soon marshalled into the room; but the keenest inquiry failed to elicit anything relative to the mysterious appearance of the letter. It was quite plain that there was no connivance on their part with the bearer of the missive; so after three or four minutes of sharp questioning they were dismissed.

"Who then was the bearer of the strange letter?" muttered Ronald Hamilton.

CHAPTER V.

The rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,
And hope is brightest when it dawns from
fear,
The rose is sweetest washed with morning
dew,
And love is loveliest when embalmed in
tears.

"It is rather hard to be condemned to inactivity when surrounded by such mysterious influences," said Ronald as he sat alone with Miss St. Clair in one of the gloomy apartments of the manor-house. "But it is very consoling notwithstanding to know that Stanhope is alive."

"It is indeed," said Lilian, giving a sigh of relief; "and yet it only makes the circumstances attending his disappearance the more mysterious, Stanhope's whole life has been so open and devoid of

secrets that his conduct at this time is all the more inexplicable."

"True," said Ronald, musingly; "but then who could exert this strange influence over him in the neighbourhood of Silverstone? There are no strangers here to whom such an action could be attributed."

"It is very puzzling," Miss St. Clair said, speaking her words musingly. "Some say that a woman's instinct is truer than a man's reason, and the idea has struck me within the last few hours that the strange occupant of Blackrock Tower knows more of the matter than we credit him for."

"What causes you to think so?"

"Nay," answered Lilian, hastily, "that's where I am completely at fault. I can give you no reason for my suspicion other than the idea which took possession of me the moment you mentioned Blackrock as one quarter in which inquiry might be made."

"And I merely hazarded that observation to rouse Mr. Bainbridge from his morbid state of despair," said her companion. "But though I suggested it I had very little hope that it would be in any way successful."

"Still I cannot rid myself of the notion that he knows something of the matter," said Miss St. Clair, thoughtfully.

"Even supposing I shared your suspicions," replied Ronald, "I don't see how I could act upon them. We have no proof whatever that they are correct. Indeed, were they, we should have no little difficulty in gleanings the smallest possible information from Dr. Philander, who, from the little I know of him, is a man who could scarcely be moved by promises or threats either."

"At least I should not advise you to try the latter," said the young girl, with some apprehension; "for who knows what harm he might do you?"

Mr. Hamilton laughed quietly.

"I should risk anything of that kind," he answered, "if I thought it would have any good effect. At the same time I am glad you take so much interest in me as to care for my welfare."

Lilian St. Clair blushed scarlet as she hastily interrupted.

"You have surely a poor opinion of me, Mr. Hamilton, if for an instant you imagine that I would be indifferent to the safety of one whom I have known so long. But, as you say, there would be little harm derived from making inquiry at Blackrock. I should, therefore, let the matter rest as it is."

Ronald Hamilton would have said more of his feelings towards Lilian St. Clair, but, remembering the calamity which had so suddenly befallen Mr. Bainbridge, he restrained himself.

"There is still one quarter left open," he said, brightening up, as if a sudden thought had struck him; "and from that quarter we might possibly glean the very information we are in need of."

"Is that from Marian Delarome?" asked Lilian, as if the same thought had suggested itself to her own mind.

"It is. I forbore mentioning it to the squire, guessing his feelings towards the girl, also knowing that it would require much tact and delicacy to conduct such an inquiry."

"You are the very personification of prudence, Ronald," replied Miss St. Clair, laughing. "Marian Delarome is a very strange girl, and much unlike her sister. Her whole manner is so full of womanly dignity, so unusual in one of her condition, that I often wonder if she really is a daughter of Mrs. Delarome."

"She is certainly in every way superior to others in the village," replied Hamilton, "and would I am sure brook no intrusive questioning from any man. Will you permit me to suggest," he went on, "that as you know her already you might call upon her and see what you can learn?"

"I am afraid that such a visit would make me more embarrassed than herself," said Lilian, with some degree of uneasiness. "No, no, poor girl, I could not do it."

"Very well then," resumed her companion, "I can see no other means of investigating the matter. Marian Delarome may know more of the disappearance of Stanhope Bainbridge than any one else."

"Then I will visit her," Lilian said, with sudden determination. "If she can give us any information without breaking faith with Stanhope I am much mistaken if she do not volunteer it most willingly."

Half an hour after this conversation Ronald Hamilton and Miss Lilian St. Clair emerged arm-in-arm from the gloomy old apartment of Silverstone Hall into the brilliant sunshine of that glorious summer's morning.

It is a matter for philosophic speculation how some news spreads. It happened in an incredibly brief time that all

Silverstone knew that Mr. Bainbridge had received a letter from his son, and that the latter was not dead, as had been at first supposed.

Speculation of course was rife as to what could have induced the young man to leave home so mysteriously. Some of the villagers shook their heads as much as to say that they could give an explanation of the matter if they wished.

But finally things ran in their old groove and little mention was made of the occurrence.

Harry Harland for his part inwardly rejoiced at being rid of a rival, especially now that it had turned out that Stanhope Bainbridge had not been killed; and he confidently hoped too that time and absence would cause Marian to forget him, and make her the more willing to listen to his own advances.

These sentiments he of course did not openly express, but a load of care seemed lifted from his heart, and he went about his accustomed work cheerfully and with light spirits.

But how far it all this time with Marian herself?

We saw the effect the first intelligence of Stanhope's disappearance had upon her, but hers was not the weak nature to give way long to this kind of suffering.

While the young squire's existence was doubtful she appeared as one walking in a dream, though bearing up heroically to take her share in the duties of the household, but the moment she knew that her lover was alive she recovered her usual manner and was apparently as cheerful as ever she had been.

She was the second in the village to know of Stanhope's safety, for another letter was delivered to her secretly into her hands as was the first into the hands of Stanhope Bainbridge.

This letter contained expressions of the most ardent affection, the writer stating that although it was necessary that he should leave her for some time the very circumstances perhaps that rendered this unavoidable would ultimately remove any barrier which might have existed to their union.

Of the existence of this second letter her mother and sister knew nothing; they fondly hoped that her returning cheerfulness was due to her maidenly pride, which had enabled her to cast the image of her high-born lover from her heart for ever.

Bernice, who was in reality very anxious for the success of Harry Harland's suit, not about comforting the young man by telling him that Marian would soon come to her senses and value his love more highly than ever.

But little did any of them dream that Stanhope's letter was hidden in Marian's bosom, or that it was from the assurances of constancy it contained that she drew all her gaiety and cheerfulness.

Miss St. Clair, in accordance with her previous arrangement with Ronald Hamilton, called upon the Delarmes and had an interview with Marian. And this she was the better enabled to do without raising any suspicions in the latter's mind from the fact that it was her constant habit while at Silverstone Hall to visit the villagers and in cases where such action was requisite to leave substantial tokens of her kindly interest in them.

On this occasion, however, she in a perfectly incidental way referred to Stanhope's disappearance, and from the sincere manner in which the family expressed their desire to have the mystery solved, Marian gathered sufficient to know that they were not in possession of any knowledge to throw light upon it, or they would have communicated it to her.

At this interview, however, her interest in Marian was much deepened by the manner in which she had borne herself in what she considered a great trial, and she resolved therewith to better her condition at the first opportunity.

Miss St. Clair was now staying constantly at the Hall with her uncle, who since Stanhope's disappearance was less inclined to be sociable than ever. She was, therefore, left very much to her own society, and the dulness of her life in the dreary old mansion was becoming insupportable.

At last the idea occurred to her that she could bring Marian over from the village in the capacity of half-maid, half-companion, for she had indeed taken a liking to her, having remarked how superior she was in natural qualities to any young woman she had met in so humble a sphere of life. But there were some difficulties in the way.

How would the squire agree to this arrangement? and, even supposing he would, how was she to get Marian to reconcile herself to it?

But Lilian St. Clair was young, pertinacious and hopeful, and she resolved to work out her ends at all hazards.

It was not long before the opportunity presented itself.

One morning at the breakfast-table the squire, in a more congenial mood than he had shown for some time, suddenly remarked:

"Lillian, dear, I have been very selfish. It must be extremely dull for you living so much alone. What can I do to render your life less irksome?"

"Oh, sir," said Miss St. Clair, warmly, "I have never found you selfish; you have always been most indulgent and kind to me. It distresses me to hear you speak thus of yourself."

"Still I have been very inconsiderate," pursued Adam Bainbridge, "in leaving you so much alone. And yet an old man's society is not what youth requires. Could we not advertise in one of the county papers for a companion?"

This was just what Lillian wanted, but in a different way to what the squire expected.

"Well, sir," she answered, simply, "I do not know that we could procure a good companion by such means, and to bring an unsuitable person from a distance would only involve needless expense and difficulty."

"True," said Mr. Bainbridge, thoughtfully; "yet our acquaintance is so limited, my dear, that I can think of no other way of procuring one."

"I think I know of one with whom I should be sure to get on, and who would also be very useful to the house," said Lillian; "that is if you would but consent to her coming here."

The old squire looked narrowly at his niece. The very tones of her voice had made him suspicious.

"And pray who may that be?" he asked, hastily. "You seem, Lillian, to have some doubt of my consent. But have no fear—speak out. Who is it?"

"Marian Delarue," Lillian St. Clair faltered out.

"What! that girl?" cried Adam Bainbridge, redenying. "You would surely not think of bringing a person to the Hall who had inveigled my unhappy son into so disgraceful an attachment?"

"I was afraid, sir, that my suggestion would not meet your approbation," replied his niece, regaining her composure. "But consider, sir, she is in every way superior to the people in her station of life, and I am not sure that she was so much to blame as you imagine."

"I am sorry to oppose you, Lillian," said her uncle, "but I could not bear her presence in this house, I assure you."

"And for my part, sir," answered Lillian, with spirit, "I should never think of bringing her here against your wishes. Still I must confess I cannot see how it would effect any harm now that Stanhope is away; and if there were any correspondence between them, we should be much more likely to know of it than if she remained in the village."

"That is quite true, but I cannot get over my prejudice against her. We had better have some one else."

Lillian St. Clair said no more on the subject upon that occasion; but some time afterwards the old squire, seeing the difficulty of procuring a suitable person, and recognizing the necessity of exerting himself for that purpose, again alluded to the subject, and at last consented, though very reluctantly, to Lillian offering the situation to Marian Delarue.

Lillian, however, felt that she had only accomplished the least difficult part of her task. The next question was would Marian come if she were asked?

It was quite likely that she would object as strongly to live at the old manor-house as the squire objected in the first instance to her living there. But Miss St. Clair, sanguine of success, resolved to obtain her consent at any price.

Meanwhile things at Silverstone had grown to be less pleasing to Marian than ever.

Harry Harland was becoming much more marked in his attentions, while the people in the village gave her to understand in more ways than one that they looked upon her as the young fisherman's sweetheart.

Not only this, but while at home her mother, and particularly her sister, gave her little peace, for they were continually talking of Harry and upbraiding her for her conduct to him.

This at last had become painful beyond endurance, and when shortly afterwards she was offered the situation at the Hall she joyfully accepted it and was duly installed the very next week as maid and companion to Lillian St. Clair.

CHAPTER VI.

Suspicion sleeps

At Wisdom's gate, and to Simplicity
Resigns her charge, while Goodness thinks
no ill

Where no ill seems.

Milton.

The mysterious disappearance of Stanhope Bainbridge still remained a mystery to the simple villagers.

It was not long ere Mark Langton again made his appearance in the village with a fresh stock of jewellery.

It was night; the weather promised to be wild

and stormy, so Mark, instead of making his way direct to Blackrock Tower as was his intention, resolved to put up till morning in the little whitewashed cottage of Laurence Harland.

So, walking up from the beach to the cottage, he knocked stoutly for admittance.

The rain had begun to come down in a heavy shower, and a cold easterly wind had set in from the open bay, when Harland senior opened the massive oaken door in answer to his summons.

"What! Mark Langton?" cried the old fisherman, astonished. "We were just talking of you. Come in."

The jewel-vendor obeyed the invitation, and found a comfortable fire burning in the ample grate of the apartment; he also beheld the fisherman's two sons, John and Harry, seated within scope of the bright lapping flames, indulging in the luxury of two newspapers.

When the young men saw Mark Langton enter the room they both rose to their feet, threw their papers aside, and expressed great pleasure at seeing him.

"Let me take your box, Mr. Langton," said Harry, "and you, John, look to our old friend's hat and cloak. Luckily you have got here in time to elude the first outbreak of the storm. Come, draw near the fire, for the night is cold."

The jewel-vendor needed no second invitation, but divesting himself hastily of the articles mentioned, and having given Harry Harland charge of the box, he drew a heavy old-fashioned chair to the fire, and held his nearly frozen hands within comfortable distance of its glowing heat.

"Ah, this is something like the thing," said Mark, rubbing his hands in evident satisfaction; "if I had been out another ten minutes I'd have been drenched to the skin. Well, you were talking of me, you say? Ahem! it's consoling that the absent are not forgotten. I think of you very often, Mr. Harland."

"Yes, we were only just speaking of you," said the fisherman—"wondering, in fact, when we should see you again; and, indeed, little expecting you on such a night as the present. But what induced you to come to Silverstone at this hour?"

"Thereby hangs a tale," replied Mark. "My first intention was to arrive here by noon, but the fates were against it, and consequently you see me here craving shelter for the night, if it will not be putting you to too much inconvenience."

"Certainly not," said the elder Harland; "we have a bed for you, Mark, and a meal too."

"Thanks, at least, for the welcome," returned the jewel-vendor, "and now what is the news in Silverstone? Has anything been heard of the young squire?"

"No," replied Harry, sulkily. "But here comes supper, Mr. Langton, and after your journey I imagine you will be hungry."

A warning look from John kept Mark from saying anything more on the subject.

Lights were now brought into the room, and the supper placed on the table by Harland's niece.

When the meal was finished and the fire replenished the jewel-vendor entered into an animated conversation with his host about the state of trade, the news of the county and many other matters too intricate to enumerate. And once more he was approaching the subject of the disappearance of Stanhope Bainbridge when Harry Harland, excusing himself, withdrew from the room. John followed, and Mark Langton and the old fisherman were alone.

"And so there is no word of poor Stanhope yet," said Mark, as he sat smoking his pipe by the fire.

"No," replied his companion; "at least nothing so far as I have heard."

"It is very strange," said the hawker. "I wish some one could throw a light on it; and they could too if they liked."

"Why do you think so?" said the fisherman, at last, "have you heard anything?"

"No, I have heard nothing. But it strikes me as suspicious that the young man should go away like that. I tell you what," said Mark, with emphasis, "there's some villainy at work, too puzzling for an honest man to unravel. I wish I had a clue to the business, and I'll be bound I would soon make it as clear as day."

"Humph!" said Harland, abstractedly, "it would take you or any one else a long time, I reckon, to do that. The young squire will turn up all right, depend upon it without any one intermeddling in the matter."

"So," said Mark to himself, "the subject seems to cause my friend Laurence no little annoyance. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he knew more of the matter than he pretends. However, if he knows more than he ought to know, Mark Langton will not be long in finding it out. Here, Mr. Harland, take a pipe of tobacco," the jewel-vendor said, handing the fisherman his tobacco pouch; "it's a little smuggled

stuff from the south, and was sent to me from London."

Laurence took the pouch and charged his pipe, and was soon puffing away as freely as his friend, upon whom he nevertheless kept his eyes fixed with no small degree of interest.

Mark looked as innocent as the other looked suspicious.

"Well," said the former, at last, suddenly wearing an inexplicable indifference, "I may be wrong in my suspicions, friend Harland, and no doubt I am wrong, and that I jump at conclusions too quickly to be prudent, but I sometimes ask myself why should the young squire run away and he having so good a home? And the more I ask myself this question the more I am puzzled. Could you form no idea of Mr. Harland? It is very perplexing. Could you not just form one idea?"

"No," responded the fisherman, curtly. "I never jump at conclusions, Mark."

But the jewel-vendor was not to be beaten off thus. His keen gray eyes told him that the theme was unpleasant to his companion, but he still persisted in it.

"Ay, you are right there," said Mark, smiling most innocently; "but you see conclusions sometimes jump at us, and force themselves upon us whether we will or not. Now, to be frank, I am in a sort of predicament myself just at present."

This latter sentence he uttered slowly, looking steadily into the face of his companion, and watching minutely for the least expression of concern which might come into his features.

"And I was thinking," he went on, "that you might help either to confirm my opinion or show that my suspicions have no foundation."

"Tell me first," rejoined Harland, with an unmoved countenance, "what your suspicions are."

The jewel-vendor bent forward, and, assuming a gravity which the importance of his communication demanded, he whispered a few words in the ear of the fisherman.

"You are a sensible man, Mr. Harland," continued the jewel-vendor, softly; "and I would just like to ask you what the squire would think if I told him what I have told you."

"I don't know what the squire would think or what he would do," replied Harland; "but I know what I should do if I were placed in your situation."

"What?" cried Mark, eagerly.

"I would just keep my suspicions to myself," said the old fisherman, speaking his words deliberately, "for I am quite sure this is a matter where a man would come to grief by jumping at rash conclusions without having sufficient knowledge to act upon them."

"I don't think he is far wrong," said the jewel-vendor to himself. "Laurence is a sensible man, and his advice is worth something, so I'll just keep the matter quiet and glean all the information I can meantime."

Then, turning to the fisherman, he resumed:

"I think you are quite right, friend Harland. It's rather dangerous work to be meddling with what one knows so little about. I'll take your advice, and not trouble myself any more about the matter."

"The wisest conclusion you could come to," said Laurence Harland, curtly. "But here are the boys. Not a word."

Before the jewel-vendor could reply Harry and John Harland entered the room.

"It's no use attempting to go out to-night, father," said Harry; "our boat wouldn't live in the terrific gale that's set in. Hark to the wind; it's ready to shake the old house about our ears!"

A violent gust, at this moment, rattled fiercely at the window, as if it would have dashed the sash into a hundred fragments.

"Heaven help any poor craft outside the bay in such a night as this," said Laurence Harland, pitifully. "I wouldn't give much for her chances of reaching a safe anchorage. No, lads," he added, turning to his sons, "we can afford to lose one night's work. The old house has sheltered us before when the billows in the bay were rolling mountains high, and so it shall again. But to rest, to rest! the morning must see you up with the lark, for there will be plenty to do on the beach, or I am much mistaken."

And as they were all tired enough after the day's labours it was not a great while before they were all in bed and asleep.

* * * * *

The next morning we are at the Hall again; the storm has cleared away, and the summer's sun is shining brilliantly over the old manor-house.

A few decked clouds sail peacefully through the heavens, and add additional beauty to that part of the broad landscape which slopes and undulates towards Silverstone.

As for the rising ground on which the squire's ancestral home is built it always wears the same dreary, weird and desolate aspect.

Storm or sunshine makes no difference to it—always and ever the same, with no single tree or shrub to give one softening ray to its dreariness.

The short time that had elapsed since Stanhope's disappearance had wrought great changes in the old squire.

Adam looked at least ten years older than he did the day on which the search had been made.

He seldom stirred from the house now, and although at times considerate and kind to his niece he held less and less intercourse with her.

As for Ronald Hamilton he came now much oftener than was his wont—ostensibly to see the squire, but in reality to enjoy the companionship of Miss Lilian. Ronald's was the only society for which the old gentleman seemed to care, but even a little of this at a time seemed more than sufficient. Although he always brightened up whenever the young man came to the Hall and expressed an irritable impatience at the shortness of his visits, his conversation with him nevertheless never extended over half an hour; then he would make an excuse on the plea of being ill, retire to his study, and no one would see him for the rest of the day.

The more indeed Ronald Hamilton saw of Miss St. Clair the more he prized the nobility and purity of her character; each visit only seemed to deepen the ardour of his attachment, and although feeling by no means confident of Lilian's affections the young man did not fail to perceive that his frequent visits were in no way displeasing to her.

On this bright, sunny morning he rode as usual to the old Hall, and after Adam Bainbridge had, according to his custom, left him alone with his niece he approached the old theme of the mysterious letter and Stanhope's disappearance.

"Old Mark was at my place yesterday," he said, "and it strikes me his visits since Stanhope's disappearance are oftener than ever. I suppose the old fellow intends supplying all Silverstone with jewellery."

"Very likely," said Lilian, laughing. "He has enough of trinkets to supply the whole county. But he hasn't got so far as this yet. I wonder if he will pay a visit to the Hall this time?"

"Has he not been here?" said Hamilton, with some surprise.

"Indeed he has not. But why do you affect so much astonishment?" asked Lilian. "I was not aware that any one here expected him."

"Humph," muttered the young man; "perhaps not." Then he seemed for an instant buried in profound thought.

Miss St. Clair looked at him with some surprise, as she said, sighing:

"The last time I saw Mr. Langton was the morning after our poor Stanhope's disappearance. But whenever he comes to Silverstone or near it he generally makes it a point to visit the Hall. So as you saw him yesterday he will most likely be here either to-day or to-morrow."

"I merely mentioned the circumstance," rejoined Ronald, "through his putting me in mind of a suggestion you made that morning and which I have never since carried out."

"A suggestion of mine?"

"Of yours."

"And pray what is that suggestion?" she asked.

"To call on Dr. Philander. You cannot have forgotten it surely."

"Oh, no," she answered, smiling. "But to what purpose when the strange man is as impenetrable as a piece of granite?"

"So we have at present every reason to believe. Yet I cannot help chiding myself for not carrying my intention into effect."

"And is that how the old jewel-vendor came into your mind?" she again asked.

"Yes. But it was not exactly through seeing him surely. Old Mark asked me if we had received any further intelligence of Stanhope, and when I said no he inquired if I had no suspicion that Doctor Philander could help to unravel the mystery."

Lilian's fair young brow puckered up with gloomy interest.

"Do you think," she asked, after a pause, "that Mark Langton believes in the supernatural powers attributed to this strange man?"

"I really cannot say," returned her companion.

"Yet I don't see why a man in his position should be above the general superstition of his class and not quite disbelieved by many occupying a much higher station. You, for instance, dear Lilian—pardon me, Miss St. Clair—" here the young man reddened perceptibly. "You, dear Miss St. Clair," he went on, "seemed to entertain no little apprehension for my safety after suggesting to me the idea of my calling there."

"Oh, oh," she laughed, "I was thinking at the time of other than the supernatural I assure you. But come," she added, smilingly, "I don't

think you have seen so much of Mark Langton as I have yet. He has impressed me very strongly that, despite his lowly calling, he is a shrewd, observant man; and I should be inclined to think that he at least is a little sceptical as to the doctor's pretended power."

"Then supposing such to be the case," said Ronald, "what reason had he in asking me if I had any suspicion of Philander?"

"That's a question. You should have asked him."

"Well, I thought at the time," said Ronald, "that he wished to discover whether I shared or not in the general belief of this peculiar man's power, and I of course gave him a laughing reply on that understanding. And yet," he added, more thoughtfully, "it may be that he had some deeper object in view. Perhaps he believes that the doctor has had some hand in Stanhope's disappearance. If I had thought that I certainly should have questioned him closely."

"If Mark did not want to tell you I doubt whether you would have got anything out of him by adopting such a course," replied Lilian, musingly.

"Well, you say he'll be here either to-day or to-morrow. Should he come I shall certainly try the experiment."

"Perhaps you had better leave it to me," Lilian replied. "Not that I would have you think that I am cleverer than you at cross-questioning," she said, blushing a little, "but—but I fancy I am a kind of favourite with him, and he might be inclined to tell me that which he would not divulge to you."

"Very well," said Ronald, with a smiling assent. "Act with him as you will. For my part I shall call on Philander at the Tower, and see if he can enlighten us on the subject."

"And you really think he will?" said Lilian.

"He might; but in any event he is known, or rather reported to be a skilful physician."

"I did not know you were in bad health, Mr. Hamilton," said Lilian, laughingly. "Really you have quite a robust look for an invalid."

"I am not very ill," he returned, joining in with her humour. "But my anxiety is less on my own account than on the account of another. I have been greatly concerned," he more gravely added, "to note the change for the worse that has taken place in your uncle."

Miss St. Clair looked serious, and a shade of pain crossed her face.

"Alas! poor uncle," she sadly murmured, "the suspense of his son's absence is killing him. Stanhope has much to answer for, if he ever left Silverstone thoughtlessly. But no, no," she added, as if speaking more to herself than to her companion, "there is some deep, wicked and impenetrable mystery in it all. I would to Heaven we could get at the root of it!"

"Courage, dear Miss St. Clair," spoke Ronald kindly. "I will call on this doctor at once, and if he knows anything of the matter rest assured he will tell us."

Their conversation at this stage was interrupted by the entrance of Marian Delarne.

The young girl was attired tastily, and looked more beautiful than ever. In her new position Marian had soon regained her cheerfulness, while the comparative refinement by which she was now surrounded and the improvement her mind was undergoing produced a grace of deportment and gave a more intellectual cast to features that were always of a highly intelligent order. Indeed, she was greatly benefited by the change in both manner and appearance.

Marian Delarne had entered to inform her young mistress that Mark Langton had arrived at the Hall and desired an interview.

"Show him into the morning-room, Marian," said Miss St. Clair, "and tell him that I shall be present with him."

As Marian left the room Lilian turned to Mr. Hamilton and said:

"I am not very hopeful of gleanings any information from Mr. Langton, but I shall do the best I can, and communicate the result to you."

So saying, she left the apartment, and proceeding to the room found Mark contemplating with evident interest the rare old paintings which adorned the walls.

As she looked at him sharply cut features she was more than ever impressed with the amount of intellectual development and the evidence of shrewdness and practical good sense they displayed.

"Good morning," she said, greeting the old man.

"So you have come to Silverstone once more."

"Oh, yes, miss," replied Mark, bowing respectfully. "You see, I can never keep away from the old Hall. But how is the squire? Poor man! it was a terrible blow the loss of young Mr. Bainbridge."

Lilian's eyes filled with tears.

"Ains, yes," she replied, "a very sad blow. But

were you not here the morning we received the letter?"

She thought this was the best mode of gleaning any information of which he might be in possession.

"Yes, surely, miss," he replied, "and in a very strange way it came too. Has no one been to see the old man of Blackrock yet?"

"To what purpose?" asked Lilian, with great composure.

"Well, you see, miss, he might know something more of the matter than common folks. If report doesn't belie him he's a dealer in magic and all that sort of thing."

"And do you believe what report says?" asked Lilian, quietly.

"Well, the truth is, miss," replied the old pedlar, "I have no more capability than the rest to judge the power of any man."

"Nonsense, Mark," said Miss St. Clair, reprovingly, "you know better than to give way to a lot of absurd stories. Come, now; be candid, and say that you don't believe that Doctor Philander has more power than any other physician. I grant you he is eccentric and does things that no one else would ever think of doing."

"Well, then it's evident that you at least don't believe in his charms or his witcheries," said Mark, laughing. "And perhaps you are right," he added. "But the cause of my visit here this morning when I should be at Blackrock is simply this."

And Mark drew a piece of note-paper from his pocket.

"Yes," said Lilian, scanning over the written words, "I see there's writing on it—something in the chemical way, Mr. Langton. But whose writing is it, and what has this to do with your visit?"

The jewel-vendor looked at her with a peculiar smile on his face, and taking a handkerchief from a pocket of his coat wiped the little drops of perspiration from his glossy forehead.

"There is nothing particular in the writing, miss," said Langton, drily; "but there is a great deal in the paper if you will permit me to say so."

"In the paper!"

"In the paper, miss. Did you notice the letter paper on which Mr. Stanhope's last words were addressed to his father?"

"Here is the letter," she said, hastily drawing a crumpled note from her bosom.

"Compare this note with that," said the old jewel-vendor, quietly; "the paper—not the writing."

Lilian drew hastily to the window, where a bright stream of sunshine was flashing through the diamond panes. She compared the two bits of letter-paper.

"Tis the same!" she cried. "Where did you get this?"

"I got that, Miss Lilian," said Mark, speaking very slowly, "from Doctor Philander; and I believe that same doctor knows more about the disappearance of Stanhope Bainbridge than any one else."

"These are weak and delusive suspicions, Mark. Have you no other proof?"

Mark's face reddened. He was almost sorry to tell that he had taken the trouble of coming all the way to the Hall on such an errand.

Lilian perceived the jewel-vendor's disappointment and hastened to assure him that his information in her eyes was none the less valuable.

"Who knows," she said, with a smile, "but this may lead to some grand discovery yet?"

"Ay, ay," said Langton, in his own mind, "it may lead me into trouble—that's little comfort. More idiot am I for not taking friend Harland's advice. See here, miss," said the old man, "whether it leads to the discovery of what I expect or not—and I hope it may for the old squire's sake—please don't mention the circumstance to a living soul. If you do it will utterly ruin me. You must know, miss, that Doctor Philander is one of my best customers, and if such a thing came to his ears I don't know how I should fare at his hands—I should at least lose his custom, that is certain."

"I should like to mention the matter to one person, with your permission," said Lilian St. Clair, coaxingly.

"And I, with all due respect, would like to know who that one person is first, before I can answer your request favourably," said Mark, cautiously.

"Well then," replied Miss St. Clair, "it is Mr. Hamilton, and you may depend, in his keeping, your secret will be perfectly safe."

"Oh, by all means tell him," said the jewel-vendor, satisfactorily, "but softly, miss, warn him to be very cautious about mentioning names."

"That is understood," she answered, with a smile, and slipped a piece of money into his hand.

Miss St. Clair when she had disposed of the jewel-vendor hurried back to the room where she had left Ronald Hamilton, and hastily related to him all that had passed.

(To be continued.)



LOVE'S DREAM AND REALITY;
ON,
THE HOUSE OF SECRETS.

CHAPTER XX.

While others fish with craft for great opinion
I with great truth catch mere simplicity.

Shakespeare.

LATE in the afternoon Mrs. Singleton, who had seen Mr. Halstead drive away from the house, presented herself at the door of Clarice's bedchamber, tapping softly for admittance.

The maid answered her inquiries about her mistress by assuring her she was much better, and Mrs. Halstead's clear, sweet voice invited her to come in.

Clarice was seated by the fire, still in her dressing-gown, but looking much refreshed by her repose. The visitor thought she had never seen her look more beautiful, and she sighed as she admitted that she was really the most loveable creature.

"You have come in time for a cup of tea with me," said Clarice, smiling—"a preliminary to your dinner, and a substitute with me."

"Shall you not join us, then?"

"I hardly feelable. My arm is somewhat painful, and I could not be dressed."

"You had, indeed, a most narrow escape," remarked Mrs. Singleton, shuddering with pretended sympathy.

"I do not know. I do not believe the dog was mad, though I am sure my husband thought so when he ordered him to be shot. I wish he had spared him for Myra's sake."

"Do not grieve on her account, madame. If the animal had gone mad it might have cost her life."

"I am sure there was nothing to fear on that score. The dog several times growled at me months ago, when I wanted to soothe him by a caress. He had a dislike to me, as those of his breed often take to members of the household. How does Myra take it now?"

"She is very sullen. I never knew her so nurse her anger."

"I am sorry for it; but I am not to blame."

"Nor her father. He meant all for the best, as I told the girl. I hope she will soon forget it; and, luckily, to-morrow she will be busy preparing for the masquerade."

"The masquerade?"

"The one for which tickets were sent her two weeks ago."

"Yes, I remember now. I had forgotten it."

"You will go, will you not?"

"You forget I am disabled," was the smiling

answer. "But I shall urge Gilbert to go, if Myra does."

"Raymond is here to escort us."

"True; and if you are Myra's chaperone, she is safe enough. I never enjoyed such scenes."

Here the maid entered with the tea-tray.

Clarice rose, and busied herself with pouring out the fragrant beverage for her visitor, and offering her the delicate sweet biscuits.

She was so kind and cordial, and looked so lovely that Mrs. Singleton's heart was half-melted, and she felt constrained to shrink from the reproaches of her own conscience.

To cover her confusion she began talking fluently.

"You have heard, of course, of the news that has made such a stir in aristocratic circles?"

"What news?"

"About Madame Brentano, the singer."

"I have heard nothing."

"Is it possible?"

"Gilbert never tells me anything about others' affairs; and you know I have been out so little."

"Colonel Atherton has acknowledged her as his daughter."

"Indeed?"

"You heard her story—at least, what was said of her—that she had been well educated, and had a guardian who supplied the funds. When her musical genius developed itself she was sent to finish her education in New York, and there appeared in several concerts. Now it turns out that Colonel Atherton, who figured as her guardian while he was abroad, was in reality her father."

"And why has he not acknowledged her before? Why pass her off as his ward merely?"

"Oh! there are different stories as to that. He lost sight of her when she went to New York, and the school at which she had been placed was broken up. It is only very lately he has found her. She had grown from childhood to womanhood, and he did not recognize her till the school teacher brought and presented her as the child he had cared for."

"How strange! Is her mother living?"

"No one can tell. There was a separation, it appears, many years ago, between the married pair, and the father retained the little girl."

"She does not know her mother, then?"

"Apparently not."

"How very sad!" exclaimed Clarice, with a deep sigh.

"Probably the miserable woman is dead," said the visitor.

"I hope not, and Madame Brentano—is her husband living?"

"I understand that she was never married."

"Why bear the name, then?"

"She assumed it when she appeared as a singer. That is often done, you know."

"I did not know it."

"Oh, yes; vocalists and actresses seldom have their own names."

"And will she continue to sing in public?"

"She is to make one last appearance at the opera, then take her farewell of the stage. Her father is unwilling for her to continue such a career."

"Naturally."

"Yet he seemed very proud of her. She is at the head of his family, and he drives her out every day. He looks like a different man; at least twenty years younger."

Clarice was musing deeply.

"How happy she must be!" she murmured, and sighed again.

Mrs. Singleton was watching her.

"You remember seeing her, that first night at the opera, madame?"

"Oh, yes, very well; and at Mrs. Miniver's concert. I was not introduced; but I saw her. She is a very beautiful woman."

"Did you notice the striking resemblance she bears to yourself, madame?"

"Gilbert spoke of it; I did not perceive it."

"That is strange; for every one noticed it. She is your very counterpart. In the same dress you might readily be taken for each other."

"Is the resemblance so strong?"

"Indeed it is. Why when Bay first was introduced to Cousin Halstead's young wife, in her bridal dress, he was astonished beyond all power of expression."

Mrs. Halstead looked visibly startled, and the colour rushed suddenly over her face.

"He had heard her sing at a concert somewhere, long ago; and would hardly believe it was not yourself when he met you at Halstead Grove."

The crimson flush gave place to pallor, for the remark called up painful recollections in the mind of Clarice.

"Strange things happen sometimes in real life. Suppose this singular likeness should prove something more than accident!"

"How could it?" asked Clarice, dreamily; for she hardly caught the meaning of the observation.

"I beg your pardon, madame; but I have wondered often at it; and it would really not be strange if a relationship were to be discovered."

Mrs. Halstead made no reply.

"You must forgive me if I have offended you," said the matron. "I would not do so for the world; but such fancies will present themselves if facts are not known. You have never told us anything of your family."

The lady was still silent.

"Did you belong to the Kent family?"

"No, madame."

"You are a native of Virginia?"

"No, I was from farther south."

"Of Louisiana?" I have heard of a family of Kents who were large sugar planters near Thibodaux."

"I am not related to them at all."

"Indeed!"

"Will you take another cup of tea, Mrs. Singleton?"

"No more, thank you."

The repulse was plain enough, but the inquisitive visitor could not give up her game.

"I have often been asked," she said, "of what family was the lady Cousin Halstead had married, and I felt rather chagrined that I could give no information. We Virginians, especially, place such stress on birth and family."

"So I have heard."

"And the Carolinians are not behind us in that respect. It is the first requisite to admission into good society that one's family should be unexceptionable."

"Do you mean must possess wealth and distinction?"

"Oh, no, that is not necessary; many of our best families are reduced, and comparatively poor. But good blood is the essential."

Mrs. Halstead sat absorbed in painful reverie.

"The Halstead family," added the lady, "trace their descent from the English nobility, and so do the Singletons. The estates have come down in an unbroken line of succession, though diminished by division among the sons of one or two generations. Colonel Halstead represents the main line, and he is very proud of his unblemished ancestry."

"He is proud of it!" echoed Clarice, with tremulous lips.

"He would not be a true Virginia gentleman if he were not. And Myra's mother was a Peyton, related to half the families of the best blood in the country. She would not have been allowed to marry a gentleman who was not of as good birth as her own."

"Does a gentleman lose caste who marries beneath him?"

"Certainly, if it is known to be a mésalliance, but, remember, it is not poverty that throws a shade over any one. A lady may remain a lady even if she has to do menial work."

"That is a good principle, but it will not bear carrying far back. Poverty deprives its victims of all the requisites to social refinement."

"True; but it cannot thin the generous blood flowing through the veins from worthy ancestors, and transmitted to children's children."

"It appears to me there is more of prejudice than reason in such ideas."

"Perhaps so, but the prejudice is universal."

"And if I cannot boast a long line of ancestors, my husband is to be regarded as having made a mésalliance!" the wife asked, with a curious smile.

"Oh, do not fancy any such thing. Everything about you, madame, proclaims you a well-born lady, and no one could think otherwise for a moment. I was only desirous of tracing your family to some of the distinguished Virginians of that name."

"I think—I believe—I am well born," said Clarice.

"I feel sure of it."

"But I have not come from Virginia, and my parents are neither rich nor distinguished."

"Kent!" repeated Mrs. Singleton, musingly; "it is a good name. What did you say was your mother's name?"

"I have not mentioned it at all."

"Indeed, I was under the impression that you had. I am so forgetful. Pray excuse me."

"Certainly, madame; and as my parents seem not to have belonged to any noted families it will be of no use to take the trouble of research."

"Forgive me if I have been inquisitive. But I feel convinced that the grace and accomplishments you possess, Mrs. Halstead, prove you sprang from no common origin."

The wife bowed at the compliment, and said:

"The few accomplishments I have owe to a careful education. You know I was brought up to earn my living as a teacher."

Mrs. Singleton was baffled.

"Mr. Halstead knew this when he proposed to marry me, and he did not appear to think my want of family an objection."

"Oh, no, how could he?" cried the inquisitor, eager to extricate herself from the embarrassment into which she had nearly betrayed herself. "My cousin recognized the stamp of the genuine metal which Miss Kent bore in her person and her character. Do not imagine I was alluding to your case in my general remarks. But to return to what I was saying about Madame Brentano, or Miss Atherton, as I suppose we must now call her. It was a romance I was weaving in my own fancy, what I said

when I noticed the strange resemblance you bear to one another."

"Strangers often are alike—are they not?"

"Not alike in that way. You both have peculiar features, such as point to a similarity if not to an actual identity of race. Those large, long, almond-shaped eyes, with the clear olive complexion, are not common, and usually belong to the natives of this country."

She stopped suddenly, for she saw Mrs. Halstead start and grow very pale.

"What is the matter, madame? You are not well! Does your arm pain you again?"

"No—no—it is not that!"

"Perhaps the constrained posture has hurt it! Excuse me for keeping you sitting; I know exercise would be better."

"I believe it would," returned Clarice. "With your permission, I will not talk any more, but take a turn in the corridor as I cannot go out. Don't trouble yourself to ring."

"Let me help you, then!"

As they passed into the hall Myra's voice was heard from her chamber.

"Aunt, can you come to me?"

"Myra wants you!" said Mrs. Halstead. "Pray go to her: do not mind me."

Mrs. Singleton went on to the young lady's room, closing the door as she entered.

The young girl had arrayed herself in the dress she had selected for the masquerade ball, and her maid had just fastened it at the waist.

"This is for the dances after supper, you know," she said. "We have all to unmash at supper and take off our dominoes."

"Is it not rather heavy?" taking up the lustrous pink silk of the full-trained dress.

"Not at all. I shall not dance much. Sylvia, bring my domino and mask."

The mask just sufficed the dimpled white chin to be visible, while the flash of two laughing eyes were like scintillations of sunshine.

"Would you know me?"

"I think not, unless by your walk; that is so quick and eager. Why cannot you learn to float like the swan-like Miss Lawson?"

"I'll practise floating. Now, what think you of that?"

"I should not know you by that gait, certainly. Myra, I have one favour to ask."

"What is it?"

"Don't flirt with Fred Hobart."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because you will learn yet how treacherous he is."

"Poor fellow! he is in love with me, and you hate him for that."

"He would deceive you, Myra. He is as devoted as ever to Mrs. Wetmore when he is not paying court to you!"

"Now, aunt, you are slandering him!"

"Indeed I am not."

"If I thought he was playing me false, I would punish him; that I would!" cried the impetuous young beauty.

"Myra! Myra! playing you false? Is he anything to you? Tell me at once."

The girl caught her stately relative around the waist and whirled her around regardless of her struggles.

"Aunt! Tell me at once, is it Ray's jealousy that makes you so inquisitive? Did he bid you find out anything?"

"Poor Ray! he would die to serve you; but he never presumes to set a spy on you, my child. It is your father—"

"My father!" repeated the girl, scornfully, "what right has he to my obedience after this morning's outrage?"

"You must not talk so, child. Nothing he has done lessens his claim to your obedience."

"And I am to obey him when he has shown no regard for my feelings!"

"Certainly; he is your father."

"Did he not order me out of the room?" cried the girl, flushing scarlet. "What does he think of me, now he has got a pretty wife to please and flatten him? They both hate me, aunt, and I will not obey them. I will have my turn soon, and you shall see how they take it."

"Myra, don't cry, child. Forget all that has troubled you."

"Forget how cruelly my poor dog was sacrificed for a hard-hearted woman!"

"Your father was not pleased that you did not come down to lunch."

"And if he thinks I am coming to dinner or to breakfast to-morrow he will find himself mistaken. He shall choose between me and his new wife."

"Don't force him to decide between you, for you know which way the scale will turn."

"In her favour of course."

"How could it be otherwise? A daughter has no chance against a youthful and lovely wife."

"Then I'll marry somebody they don't like!" exclaimed the wilful girl, wiping away her tears, while her maid unfastened her dress.

"By rashness, child, you will only prepare suffering for yourself," said her artful Mentor. "Why cannot you confide in me, dearest Myra?"

"Because you are treacherous like the rest."

"I? What do you mean?"

"What were you talking so long about with my step-mamma in her room?"

"I was working for your good, foolish child."

"How so?"

"I questioned her about her family. There's a mystery about her, Myra, that has long haunted me."

"And what have I to do with it?"

"Where there is mystery there may be guilt."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the girl. "We all knew her as Miss Kent. She was well enough then. I, on the other hand, am not since she married my father that she has estranged him from me."

"You know nothing of her antecedents, child. Nor does your father. He was too much in love with her to ask or care about her. Ray knows something—more than he will tell me."

"Ray? And will he tell me, do you think?"

"He might, if you were to use the spell of your beauty to make him open his lips."

"But what good will it do us to find out anything? She is Mrs. Halstead now."

"True; but it would give you power over her to know her secret. If she has one."

"I don't like secrets. I should not like to use any such power, even if I had it. I like open dealing, aunt."

"So do I; but sometimes we must meet guile with craft. I suspect the woman, Myra, and I shall try to find her out. Say something about it, but get all you can out of Ray."

CHAPTER XXI.

Long as my hills, sweet as my revenge.

Shakespeare.

It was part of Mrs. Singleton's deliberate plan to keep Myra from any good understanding with her stepmother; and it needed but a few hints and innuendoes, artfully thrown in, to maintain the sullen indignation of the wilful, impetuous girl against Clarice, whom she blamed chiefly for the loss of her dog.

She refused to appear at any meal the following day, expecting her father to come up and talk with her, as he used to do when she gave way to anger at anything he had done, or at least to summon her to his presence, where, as she expressed it, she could "have it out."

It would have been a relief to her to have an opportunity of pouring out her grief and vexation on the heads of the two who had offended her.

Then sunshine would have returned, for her nature was not one to nurse resentment.

All day she remained in her room, expecting her father to send for her, but no message came.

Her breakfast, lunch, and dinner were brought up by Sylvia. Weary of her voluntary seclusion, she longed to go downstairs, where the sound of cheerful voices was heard, but her pride would not bend itself.

Mrs. Singleton came in several times to propose a drive, or a walk, or to suggest some addition to the toilet destined for the masquerade; but Myra rejected all efforts to win her to a sociable mood. Two or three times she asked how her father took her absence.

"He has said nothing at all," was the reply.

"Not even to ask if I am well or ill?"

"Oh, he knows you are not ill, and that you are going to the ball to-night. He learned that from Mrs. Halstead."

"While he has her company I suppose he does not care for mine."

"What can you expect?" said Mrs. Singleton, with a significant shrug, "a beautiful and accomplished wife may well cause a man in love with her to be unmoved by the wayward humours of a spoiled daughter."

"Aunt," and a sob broke in the clear young voice, "you are sure my father cares no more for me."

"Heaven forbid I should say so, child! But you must not expect the same manifestation of affection as when you were all he had."

"I must expect to be thrown aside and neglected, and to have my feelings trampled on as they were yesterday!"

"You must be reasonable, my dear, and not expect to occupy the first place in your father's affection."

"What have I done to lose his affection?"

"Nothing, certainly; but a man's love for a devoted wife is always the strongest."

"But why must I be insulted and outraged because papa is so happy with—that woman?" cried Myra, weeping afresh. "Is he not at least sorry for having caused me such grief in depriving me of my favourite?"

"He certainly has shown no sorrow," answered the mischief-maker. "Both he and Mrs. Halstead have been in unusually fine spirits to-day."

She little knew to what pitch of desperation she was urging an undisciplined nature.

"It was sport for them!" muttered the angry girl. "But I can make him feel! I can inflict on him quite as severe a wound."

"Come, darling, you must not fret. One at least has mourned your absence, and will not be consoled till he has the sunshine of your presence."

"Pshaw! Ray does not care for me!"

"At this very moment, dear, he is waiting to know at what time he is to call for us!"

"For you—"

"And my fair charge. Dry your eyes, love; here is your maid with lights. She will bring up tea, and then it will be time to dress."

Two hours later, and Myra stood before her mirror arrayed in her splendid and becoming dress; jewels in her beautiful hair, and decking her neck and arms.

Never had she looked so brilliant—so like a young queen. A change had passed over her face; if the fresh hilarity habitual to her had vanished, it was replaced by a fierce, forced gaiety, born of the bitterness of her heart. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes fairly blazed, as she surveyed the lovely reflection given back by her faithful glass and listened to the compliments paid her, her pride rose, and with it resentment at her fancied wrongs, mingled with a resolution to have vengeance.

She had not yet spoken to her step-mother, and when Mrs. Singleton led her past the open door of that lady's apartment she would not stop as she had been accustomed to do, but hurried on, and ran down the stairs to the drawing-room.

Mrs. Singleton followed, and Sylvia with the dominoes, etc.

Raymond was in the room, which was dimly lighted. He rose as his lovely cousin entered, regally arrayed, and with the haughty look in her eyes which he had never before seen. He took her hand, and looked earnestly into her face; but she drew back, and took her seat at the opposite side of the room.

His mother whispered as she came close to him:

"Don't say much to her; she is still vexed about yesterday's work, and her father's leaving her to herself. She will get over it in time. Is the carriage ready?"

The last question was addressed to a servant, who had just entered. He bowed as he answered in the affirmative.

The ladies assumed their dominoes, took their masks in their hands, and went down, Ray escorting Myra.

She did not say a word as they drove to their destination.

They mingled in the splendid scene, gay with varied costumes, light, music and merry voices.

Mrs. Singleton preferred one of the side rooms, where parties were playing at cards, or eating ices and sipping cooling beverages. She left Myra to her son.

Ray had not failed to notice Myra's strange humour, which would not brook the least interference with her erratic movements. She seemed determined to shake him off.

As one after another accosted her Ray was gradually left behind, but he managed not to lose sight of her.

It was wholly a new scene to the young girl, and the freedom given her by the disguise was a novelty in which she delighted.

Shafts of wit and drollery were sent to one and another of her intrusive admirers, some of whom she could not recognize.

In the middle of the rooms, where the crowd was densest, she saw close at her side a figure in a green silk domino for which she had been looking. The gentleman stooped his mouth close to her ear, and murmured her name.

"At last, sir," she said, haughtily. "Your pretended impatience to find me was all a sham."

"Don't condemn me!" he whispered again. "I have been detained. Now that I have found I shall not leave you, my charmer."

She took his arm, and they walked about the rooms.

After an hour passed in the dance many of the guests descended into the garden, which was brilliantly illuminated, and set out with tables of light refreshment.

Myra was led down into the garden by her companion, and into a secluded arbour.

He removed his mask and she did the same. The air was refreshing after the close and crowded ball-room.

Myra's face was flushed, and there were traces of tears on her cheeks. She had been telling all her grief. Her companion's expressions of sympathetic indignation had wrought up her susceptible spirit to a desperate pitch.

"You will have a succession of these humiliations

to look forward to, Myra," said Fred Hobart, in a low tone of resolve, for he had cast his success on the present die. "How can you bear them?"

"I will not bear them!" the girl exclaimed.

"Will you live with those who treat you as an inferior?"

"No—I have made up my mind I will not," cried the excited girl.

"But you cannot break the chain alone. Your father can compel you to submit to any usage he pleases."

"He will find he cannot. I will go away, and earn my bread by music-teaching, or go on the stage like Madame Brentano."

"You could not do either, my poor darling! No, no—you must let me set you free. I can teach you how to punish your cruel oppressors, and secure your own release beyond all interference."

"How?"

"Trust in me; let me act for you!"

"But they would not listen to you. I have been forbidden to speak with you. If Mrs. Singleton knew we were together, I should be pulled back and receive a lecture."

"Myra, you must baffle them all by one step. You must give yourself to me."

"Fred!"

"I have foreseen this! I knew you would be made the sacrifice! It will end by your being forced to marry some one—"

"No, no! that can never be!"

"Myra, you love me, and I adore you. You are no longer a child. You have a right to choose for yourself. Be mine at once, and bid your tyrants defiance."

"But, Fred—"

He met her objections by caresses. He flung his arms around her, and pressed her passionately to his breast; his eloquence of love flowed like a torrent.

Myra strove to release herself, and whispered that they would be seen by some of the company.

But her lover replied that they were alone in the garden.

The other guests had gone in to supper.

Myra rose to follow them, but young Hobart led her in a different direction.

"You shall not leave me so!" he continued, in wild excitement. "You have dealt cruelly with me before this."

"Oh, no! I never was cruel to you, Fred."

"You never shall be again! Don't put on your mask, dearest girl! You shall not return to the rooms."

"But I must."

"They are all gone to the supper room. You shall sup with me!"

"I do not want any supper. I am not well. I want to go home!"

"I will take you home, love."

"You? but what will Mrs. Singleton say?"

"She will say nothing. Come, Myra."

Pouring out passionate expressions of his wild love, the young man drew the bewildered girl to a small gate, which was unlocked.

As he threw it open she saw a close carriage.

The coachman was standing by it.

At a sign from young Hobart he opened the carriage door.

Before the girl could say a word her lover had seized her in his arms.

He lifted her into the carriage, sprang in after her, and the coachman instantly closed the door.

"But, Fred, this is not papa's carriage. Let me out directly."

"It will answer our purpose. No, you shall not escape!"

He clasped her closely in his strong arms, and tried to silence her remonstrances by kisses.

"Mr. Hobart, what does this mean!" exclaimed Myra.

"Nothing to displease you, dearest! Only that I love you too well to lose you!"

The carriage was now in rapid motion.

By a sudden effort Myra released herself and turned to the window.

She saw they were going in the opposite direction to that leading to her father's house.

"We are going wrong!" she shrieked. "Stop the carriage at once!"

She beat on the window with her hand, and tried to open it.

"Why do you not stop the man? He is not taking us home!"

"To our home—he is. Let him alone! You are mine now, beyond all power to part us!"

The girl comprehended that an elopement had been designed.

"Fred Hobart!" she cried. "Stop the horses! I do not choose to run away with you."

"But I choose to carry you off!"

"Where—where!"

"Wherever I please!" the young man answered, in an altered voice.

"I command you to stop, and let me get out this instant!"

"You shall not get out. You wanted to punish your father for his cruelty, and I want revenge for his outrage on me. We shall both be gratified. I planned this a week ago. Be quiet. I shall take you where I please."

"Wherever you take me I shall claim protection from you! Do you think I will marry a man who has done as you have done, sir?"

"Whether you do or not makes no difference," muttered her captor.

"What do you mean?"

"If you do not choose to marry me I shall not compel you, Miss Halstead. My revenge will be more complete on your ruffian of a father!"

"And for this you have brought me away—stolen me from the protection of my friends!" cried the sobbing girl.

"For just this!" responded the lover. "I did aspire to your hand, Myra; and I may marry you yet; but my chief object is to revenge myself on a man who once beat me so unmercifully."

The unhappy girl saw on what a precipice she stood.

"Do you call this good faith to me?" she cried.

"Yes—like a man who will not bear an outrage unavenged. Myra, you cannot change matters now—submit quietly."

The girl had flung up the window while speaking, she thrust her head out and screamed to the driver to stop.

They had already passed out of the compact streets.

"No more of that!" cried Hobart, sternly, drawing her forcibly away, and letting down the window. "The man has his instructions—he will not stop for you."

"And you pretend to love me!" wailed the girl.

"I do love you."

"You are unmoved, sir!" cried the girl, with reviving spirits. "You cannot—you shall not accomplish your object. I will denounce you, and claim the protection of the first person I see."

"You will find it hard, Miss Halstead, to fulfil your threats. We are going where you will not be likely to see any one but your humble servant, and those in his pay, for some days at least."

Desperate with her terror, Myra wrapped her hand in the domino she still wore, and dashed it through the glass, which was shivered to pieces.

Again her cries for help rang on the air, the more loudly as she heard the trampling of hoofs behind the carriage.

Fred heard it too. He pulled the girl back, and held his handkerchief to her mouth to stifle her screams.

"Hold on, there, if you do not want to be fired upon!" shouted a manly voice, and a horseman dashed past the window.

Myra darted up with a cry of joy, but her captor held her fast.

She heard the shout again—this time in front.

The horses were pulled up suddenly, and panting, stood still. The driver broke into a volley of oaths, as he was jerked violently from his seat and made to measure his length on the ground.

The next instant the carriage door was flung open, and the assailant cried out:

"Give me your hand, Miss Halstead, and I will help you to alight!"

Myra stretched out both her arms towards her deliverer. Hobart's astonishment paralyzed him for a moment; but when he saw the girl leaving the carriage he caught her dress and sprang out after her.

"Who are you?" he shouted—"and how dare you stop travellers in this manner?"

The stranger was supporting Myra, who was near fainting.

"Let go that young lady!" cried Fred, "and take yourself off! I am armed, too, as you will find to your cost!"

He drew a revolver from his breast while shouting to the driver to come to his assistance.

The stranger tenderly placed Myra on the ground, and strode towards his enemy.

He snatched the pistol from Hobart's hand before he was aware of it, flung it to a distance, and pushed him back several paces.

"As for you, fellow"—turning to the coachman, who crept up timorously—"turn your horses and be ready to take this lady back to town immediately."

"This lady goes with me!" cried Hobart, fiercely. "Ruffian as you are, you are doing her no service. She came with me freely, and has promised to marry me."

Myra had recovered her consciousness, and darted forward. She had recognized her deliverer by his voice, though it was too dark to see his face.

"Oh, Ray!" she exclaimed; "I am so glad you have come! Do not believe that man! I did not want to run away with him!"

"I know all, Cousin Myra," answered Raymond. "I was at the garden gate; I had watched him all the evening; I saw that he was deceiving you for some purpose; I should have overtaken you before but I found it difficult to find a horse. Now let me put you in the carriage—I will take you home."

"Oh, Ray! how good you are! Is it far from home?"

"You are three miles from the city."

She trembled so violently that Raymond had to lift her into the vehicle. He made the coachman take his seat and climbed up after him.

"You are taking possession of my property unceremoniously enough!" said Hobart, with a forced laugh.

"I know to whom the carriage belongs, and the driver too. You may walk back to your hotel."

"You cannot wipe out one fact!" shouted the discomfited young man. "She was caught eloping with me."

Singleton clutched the reins and stopped the horses instant to answer the taunt.

"Villain!" he cried. "I have let you off without chastisement to-night; but if I hear of any falsehood on your part you shall have the chastisement you merit with interest."

"You shall give me satisfaction, sir."

"Not as a gentleman! You have acted like a felon and shall be punished with the lash."

He took up the long whip and struck at his foe, but the latter evaded it, and while he vented his disappointment in anathemas the carriage was driven rapidly off.

(To be continued.)

BLENKARNE INHERITANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Miss Arlingeour's Will," "The Ebony Casket," "The Secret of Schwarzenburg," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AIMEE clenched her hands and set her white teeth savagely, glaring at the new-comer in mingled hate and despair.

"Yes, Adam," answered that person, with a loving glance toward the young man, "and it seems I am needed to identify some one—who is it? Ah, I see; it is Aimée, the Hindoo woman, and her son Amri. What are they doing here?"

There was a new look about his kind old friend that puzzled Algeron, a dignity and nobility of carriage that General Vansittant's soldier valet had never betrayed.

"And this then is the young gentleman to whom the general gave the belt? This is Algeron Vansittant?"

"Certainly. Does any one dispute it?" returned Adam, coolly.

"And these?" pointing toward the discomfited mother and son.

Adam shrugged his shoulders.

"The woman was a half-caste servant in General Vansittant's house. The lad is undoubtedly her son. A wily pair."

"What is your testimony worth?" burst forth Aimée, furiously; "you, a fugitive from justice. I denounce him as having escaped somehow from prison, where he was put to wait his trial for a terrible crime. Have you not seen the papers? I tell you it is General Vansittant's murderer. I denounce him to you. It is your duty to arrest him."

Adam turned upon her with a disdainful smile.

"You have not followed up the papers, Aimée. Did you not read last evening's latest report, the news hurried on by special messengers to catch the other steamer? Sir Richard Atcherly had laid the whole case before the Governor-General a week before your crafty plot procured my arrest. The Governor-General himself saw General Vansittant's body before there was any dagger-wound upon it. Besides, your confession to me in the prison was listened to by the officers commanding the garrison. My innocence was fully established, and it was by the secret order of the Governor-General that I was liberated and put upon the steamer to carry out, as far as might be, the last wishes of his well-beloved friend Ralph Blenkarsen, only known in Calcutta as General Vansittant. Are you satisfied, or will you read the full report in the papers? You may be interested in the reward offered for the missing valuables out of the general's private room at Garden Reach."

He tossed towards her a small packet of newspapers and turned to Algeron.

"You did not for a moment believe poor Adam guilty of that monstrous deed, Algeron?"

"Not for a single instant. But, dear Adam, it is all mysterious to me still. Explain, I beg of you, why the general sent me away so hurriedly. Alas, alas, to think that I shall never look upon his face again!"

"There is a long story to tell—longer, perhaps, than any one of us suspects," said Adam, looking

around upon the breathless group with some deep emotion in his heart, for his eyes misted over and his lips quivered. "Let us try to tell it correctly with each other's help and correction. Let us go back to the time when yonder stately mansion, which the sombre shrubbery has been trained to hide from this place, was gay and glad with the brightness of a happy family circle; when old Sir Ralph was jovial and jolly as the merriest squire in England, with his three boys as he used to call them—Ralph, Aubrey and Guy—and his two girls—his niece and ward. What a happy home it was, and though the members were of so many families how like one they seemed in mutual affection and trust. You will bear me witness, Colonel Blenkarsen, and you also, Madame Roscoe, that Ralph and Aubrey seemed no nearer than Ralph and Guy, or Aubrey and Guy, although the two first were own brothers, and the others only cousins. Warm-hearted old Sir Ralph had gathered them all together while yet so young that they had grown up looking upon him as their father, and upon each other as of the nearest possible tie. It was Ralph who was the especial favourite with the genial benefactor—perhaps because he was the elder, perhaps because of his name. I am sure Ralph did not exult, or the others envy, when people hinted that it was he who would receive the largest bequest, as well as inherit the title, all was so smooth, and placid, and loving there. When did discord enter? Who can answer me?"

"You frighten me," cried Lady Blenkarsen, throwing up her veil and looking over to him wildly. "Who are you? Do the dead rise? You are Ralph, or you are Aubrey. The one they tell me lies dead in Calcutta, and the other was killed long ago down in that dark Nemesis hollow below the Terrace gardens. But no matter, let me confess here that I can answer the question. I was the unhappy but innocent cause of all the sore trouble that came into that peaceful home. Discord and sorrow entered when I returned from school and took my place there, and yet Heaven knows if I was the cause I was not the prompter."

"Perhaps you are right," he answered, more calmly than she had spoken. "I said the story must be told with explanations from different sources, else how should we make it out? It is certain that the three young men all loved Sir Ralph's beautiful and fascinating ward, each in his own peculiar but equally passionate way. I am sure if only she had plainly and positively chosen one out of the three, the other two would have done their best to conquer their disappointment and grief, and the family would have still been harmonious. Unfortunately, Ernestine, from some inexplicable motive you secretly encouraged all three, or seemed to."

"Let me explain for you," interposed Colonel Guy, when he saw her ladyship make an eager, deprecating motion.

"Fortunately the full explanation is in our hands. Madame Blanc, who is now a raving maniac, has left a book behind, the fiendish record of all her plots, her triumphant devices, and Lady Blenkarsen has found the book. She was the arch enemy who planned all, who deceive every one of us, and with her fiendish arts moulded us all to her wishes, and set us to executing the very manœuvres that were to seal our own misery. Ernestine of all others was the most blinded. Madame Blanc made her believe that all Guy's prospects depended upon Sir Ralph's ignorance of her love for Guy and her engagement to him. It was the same wily mind that falsely interpreted all the girl's innocently friendly speeches to Ralph into confessions of a return of his mad passion. She forbade Ernestine to refuse either Ralph or Aubrey in plain terms, while she encouraged her genuine affection for Guy. She carried false messages; she even sent forged letters; she secretly fanned the flame in each passionate young heart, and made the three who had been like loving brothers jealous, embittered, malignant rivals, each believing himself preferred over the other if left to her unbiased judgment. She likewise managed to drop into Sir Ralph's mind her leaven of doubt and discontent. It is marvellous to see how patiently and persistently she worked, and what seeming miracles she accomplished, deceiving one and all, without her own wile agency being mistrusted or revealed. It was she who precipitated that last unhappy scene. Poor Ralph! poor Ralph! it was the forged letter that Madame Blanc sent him, in Ernestine's name, that drove him to such frenzy. It was her last goading speech to Aubrey that made him so harsh and un pitying—so fierce to resent his brother's accusation. It was this demoniac spirit that wrought out the whole, and all to fulfil a vow she made against Sir Ralph's father and down unto his children's children. It seems, indeed, that she was badly used. She was a great heiress, but unprepossessing in looks, and unlovable in character, and the first Sir Ralph betrothed his only son to her, and she loved the young fiancé with the fierce passion of fiery nature, and was all ready for a magnificent wedding, when sud-

denly the young baronet came home from a foreign trip with a fair young bride on his arm. His father was dead and hers also, and no one took up her cause. But she went down on her knees, and made her black vow of revenge to hunt down into ruin and misery the whole race from generation to generation while she lived. She put her great fortune to usury, living herself like a miser, and devoted all her life to the fulfilment of the vow. You must read to understand. The book explains everything—all the blunders, the strange fatalities, the never-ceasing misfortunes that happened to us all, down to the present day."

"Then it explains also how, when that terrible scene in the wood ended, and Aubrey was stretched lifeless and bleeding by Ralph's passionate blow, how she came in, and hurried away the horrified, bewildered Ralph, and hid him in the secret cave, while likewise at the same time she dragged off Aubrey's senseless body, and while she made all believe that it had been secretly buried in reality and truth she brought him back to life, filled his mind with stories of his brother's hate, his uncle's anger, his ladylove's inconstancy, and hurried him out of the country. Does it explain that?" inquired Adam.

"Yes, and much more. How she worked upon our proud-spirited Ralph, and drove him also for ever from his native land and his home as a traitor, making him swear upon his knees that he would never again put his foot upon English soil."

"She did not know that she had put his hands upon the mythical treasure. It is a pity she should not have had that knowledge to sting back. Ralph tore down a great rock during those miserable nights in the cave, and found the belt where Sir Marmaduke had hid it so many years before. He had meant to restore it, until she came with news that old Sir Ralph had himself married Ernestine, and disinherited and driven away in fierce anger both Guy and his sister; then he determined to carry the belt with him, and preserve it until neither Sir Ralph nor the new Lady Blenkarsen should have any benefit from the treasure."

"Are you Ralph?" demanded Madame Roscoe, eagerly. "Why do you speak in riddles? Are you Ralph?"

"No. I am Aubrey! Ralph is dead, and I made his last moments peaceful by the revelation of my true name; that I had forgiven him he knew long before. But I made a vow, perhaps a wicked one, that I would never reveal my existence except one of us was dying. So I served, and loved, and cared for him for twenty years as Adam. It was I who brought Algeron to him with proofs that he was his brother's child. He was deceived in the dates, that was all. I married a frail little girl on the passage out, a poor child whose father was lost overboard, and she left friendless and poor; married her more from compassion than love, it is true, for my aching heart had not recovered from all the horror of the shock it had received. But in time I am sure she would have healed my sorrows, she was so sweet, and gentle, and good. She died only a year after Algeron's birth."

Algeron sprang forward with a little cry.

"Then you are my father! Oh, Adam, now I understand why I loved and trusted you so much."

While the two embraced with tender and joyful affection Aimée was staring at them in a sort of fascinated rage of sullen resentment. She turned now slowly towards the door, but no one headed her, for all were watching the newly restored father and son.

"Ah!" spoke Lady Blenkarsen, thoughtfully, "a kind Providence has still watched over us all. Let us hope it is not too late for reconciliation and happiness. I shall not attempt to exonerate my own sinfulness. Guy has seen the cruel letter which stung both my pride and my love so cruelly, and which until yesterday I fully believed to have come from him. He has read also, in that horrible diary, how craftily Madame Blanc worked upon a writhing, half-distracted creature to make me willing to accept the chivalrous offer of marriage from Sir Ralph to urge me to take revenge upon those who, it appeared, had so cruelly slighted and deserted me. Ah, me! ah, me! I was so bitterly wounded, I was willing to hide my aching heart under a mask of pride, and she was continually feeding my morbid sensitiveness with stories of the sayings and doings at the manor-house until I seemed to catch something of her insane spirit. I confess before you all my greatest sin—a sin which Heaven has punished me for over and over again these last fifteen years, until it has often seemed that I must die to escape it."

"She was continually telling me that the manor-house was waiting anxiously for the birth of my child, and picturing the exultation there should it prove a girl, the dismay if a son should cut them off from all inheritance of estate and title both, until I shared something of her anxiety, and consented that a physician and nurse of her choosing should be my sole attendants. How can I look you in the

face, Aubrey and Guy, and tell you that I have voluntarily cheated and defrauded you? Unknown to any but myself and that nurse and physician, my little daughter was carried away secretly, and put out to nurse, and a male babe taken in its place."

Her tone was low and sorrowful, her proud head was bowed in bitter contrition; but no one, not even Madame Roscoe, lifted a pointing finger or gave an angry glance.

"When it was fairly done I came to my senses, and saw how monstrous was my wickedness. Alas!

I fear it was not true repentance for the sin so much as yearning after my own child," she went on, sadly.

"But then it was too late to restore anything.

Word had been given out of an heir's birth, the bells

had been rung, and bonfires kindled. It was too

late to retract. Besides, there was my husband's

natural indignation and anger to brave. The poor

man was so proud of his fine, stout boy. Alack,

alack! can any one guess all I suffered? I think I

fairly loathed the sight of that strong, rolicking

boy, and I yearned with feverish longing towards

my little, delicate girl. I told you I was speedily

overtaken by retributive justice. The boy was not

quite two years old when we were comparatively

certain that he was an idiot. While he had such a

strong and perfect body, he had a feeble, stunted

mind. Poor Sir Ralph! I think it nearly killed him.

Certainly, from the moment he was convinced of it,

he failed swiftly. You understand now why he left

so peculiar a will. His pride was even stronger

than mine. Well, well, he had his rest so soon. I

should have confessed the whole, even at the last

minute, but he was stricken suddenly with the

paralysis, and could not understand a word I said.

Ah! that bitter, bitter time. Let me hasten away

from it, although that which came after was more

horrible still.

"My secret idol, the little girl left in a hireling's

care, whom I dared not care for, to whom I must not

betray a mother's yearning, was lost—drowned.

The child I had meant to adopt when she was older

—who was to be the solace and comfort of my life—

that child was allowed to wander down to the docks

—to fall into the water—to die! Oh, friends, spare

me your chiding words! I have been punished—

oh, how I have been punished!"

She bent her pale face down to her clasping

hands, and the hot tears poured from her eyes.

Many another pair in the silent room was wet

likewise.

Daisy involuntarily started up from her seat, and

took a step forward, and then, seizing Algeron's

hand wildly, she asked:

"Tell me—oh, tell me, dare I hope? Where is,

uncle, that woman who was to come? I shall go

mad if I do not know soon!"

He clasped the trembling little hand fondly.

"Wait a moment longer, my darling—only a

moment longer."

"Well," resumed Lady Blenkarne, more com-

posedly, "it is not too late for me to repair some of

the wrong. I will make a legal confession of the

fraud practised. Sir Aubrey, I will not hinder you

a single moment from your rights. I am thankful—

oh, so thankful, Guy, that it is not you who will

take the title, or many might think it was for your

sake, rather than for the righting of a sin, that I

confessed the truth."

No one answered her, for Algeron, with agitated

Daisy on his arm, crossed towards her.

"Will you be good enough to answer a single

question for me, Lady Blenkarne? Was the child

drowned at the Liverpool dock?"

"Yes," answered she, with a shudder.

"Mother! mother!" shrieked Daisy, springing

into her arms, "it was not your child who was

drowned. It was poor little Daisy Wymer, and I—

I am your May!"

Incredulity, amazement, slow convictions, and

then almost delirious joy were all eloquently ex-

pressed in the pale face that confronted hers.

Holding fast upon those little hands, Lady Blen-

karne listened to poor Blennerhasset's story, and at

its close received the warm congratulations of the

others.

"Ah," cried Sir Aubrey, as we must call him

now, "See how beautiful the end is to be brought

out! My son loves her. I read the pretty story in

their faces already. Ernestine, your daughter will

be Lady Blenkarne after all. And you will be happy

again. You have been true to Guy through all.

And it was you who saved the belt from that woman's

clutches and sent it back to us. I seem to be sure

that, though they came late, the Blenkarne Ene-

rauds will be able to shine at more than one brilliant

wedding."

"And more than two, let me hope, Ethel," whis-

pered Frank Osborne, softly. "Did you see our de-

feated bridegroom stealing away—he and his haughty

mother both?"

"What have they gone?" exclaimed Ethel, glad

to cover her confusion by any diversion of subject.

"Do you know, Uncle Guy, that the woman and her

son have slipped away?"

"Let them go," said Aubrey, glancing about him carelessly. "Be sure that Aimée is bitterly enough punished now, not so much by the defeat of her own audacious plans as by my triumph over her. She hated me with a right cordial hatred. And now let me have a word with my namesake. So you remembered me, and named your boy after the poor murdered Aubrey, Madame Roscoe! Well, well, I think we shall be a happy family again. Ernestine, what do you say? Is not the Terrace large enough for us all?"

"The Terrace is yours, Sir Aubrey," she answered.

"The poor youth who represents to the world its famous old ancestor needs only comforts to secure his continued satisfaction. And that it will be my duty to secure to him. For my daughter—?" Here she turned her glorious eyes, brimming with grateful joy, upon the youthful pair beside her. "There will be of course her rightful share in the private fortune of Sir Ralph. But if, as you say, there is to be so pleasant an arrangement, surely I shall be the last to ask for any division."

"So let it be then. The Terrace shall once more behold us gathered there in a happy family group."

"And you—I know what bitter thoughts you have cherished against me, Mrs. Roscoe. Can you give me once again the friendship forfeited for so many years?" asked Lady Blenkarne.

Madame Roscoe coloured deeply, and her eyes filled with tears of self-conviction.

"I have been very foolish and hasty in my judgments, Lady Blenkarne," she began.

"Lady Blenkarne," said her ladyship, reproachfully; "in the old days it was Ernestine or Tinie."

"Dear Ernestine, I will try to go back to those days and forget all the others. I am ashamed now to look to my own child in the face. Oh, Ethel, how nearly I have perilled your life-long happiness! And I am dazed and bewildered still. Are we really going to the Terrace again? And shall we truly own the Blenkarne Emeralds?"

"Truly in both cases," replied Colonel Blenkarne. "And now let us feast our eyes upon their long-dreamed-of but ever before mythical glories."

He opened the box in which they had been deposited, and held them up, the glorious, wonderful, resplendent gems!

They filled the whole room with scintillating splendour.

A cry of admiring rapture arose from the group.

In the midst of it came an humble call for Daisy and Lady Blenkarne.

"Poor Esther!" exclaimed the latter, the moment her eyes fell upon the pale, forlorn figure that came into the room, walking sedately by Blennerhasset's side. "You were right. This is the same girl who I have long thought was drowned in the docks."

Esther looked a moment from one to the other then ejaculated:

"Now may Heaven be praised! I have nothing to delay me a single instant longer. I shall fly back to the docks. I am going to Australia to my poor, patient Thomas. Heaven bless you both. There is no more to say."

And whirling about she marched straight out of the room and the house.

Straight on to Australia let us think, for she found Thomas, and that faithful pair were also made happy.

"But where is Aubrey, my handsome young namesake?" repeated Sir Aubrey, for the second time, looking around the room for him, but vainly.

"I can guess where one should look to find him," laughed the colonel. "That dainty little Christabel is listening to the wonderful story by this time. Can we spare one of our emeralds for her?"

"Or for me," queried Frank Osborne, holding fast to blushing Ethel's hand; "when I have proved myself worthy, I mean?"

"Such a general honeymoon is at hand," declared Sir Aubrey, with a comical grimace.

"And we are all too grateful for our own restored happiness to be cruel to others," observed Colonel Guy. "Ernestine, you are looking tired and exhausted. I fear those poor hands are paining you sadly—the hands that saved the emeralds by their own suffering. Let us return to the Terrace now. Of course your daughter will accompany you, and Aubrey, and his son."

"If one goes we must all keep in that one's company," repeated Sir Aubrey. "The Terrace must hold us all to-night."

"But I cannot leave poor uncle," whispered Daisy to Algeron. "Dear uncle, how cruel I have been to him to-day."

Blennerhasset heard, and his wan face brightened.

"Then you forgive me? You love me a little again, my Daisy?"

"Oh, uncle, how can I help it? I ask your forgiveness rather."

"Kiss me, Daisy, for this time only I ask it."

She left a dozen kisses on his cheeks and lips.

"Heaven bless the child!" he murmured, and

then added, earnestly: "Go with them, dear, it is the place where you belong. Don't you or Algeron give me a mournful thought, but go. I tell you truly it is the truest happiness that can be given me now to leave me alone with my old comrade to-night."

They saw that he was in earnest, and dared not refuse, but Algeron sent a trusty man to sleep in the house.

The man was not called upon, however. He said the maimed old soldier sat beside the bier with his arms stretched across it, and never moved or stirred any time that he looked in upon him. He found him in the morning still with closed eyes, but breathing heavily and strangely, and hurried for a physician and the young people at the Terrace.

"Paralysis of the brain," said the learned doctor.

"A broken heart," whispered Daisy; "but I cannot mourn, knowing how happy they must be."

And so the two old comrades shared one grave.

Of Amri and his mother they did not hear again. But we cannot forbear relating their end. Rushing out of England in disgust and humiliation, the pair eagerly embraced an opportunity to sail to Australia, and on the passage Aimée captivated the fancy of a wealthy ex-convict returning to his cattle and farms, who promptly married her and carried her to his home in rude pomp. Amri hung around them, but was continually bringing them into trouble by his lawless ways. Finally he was arrested out in the bush, where he had wandered off in his vagabond style, for some flagrant misdemeanour, and tried by the summary proceedings of a vigilance committee. The poor culprit, with the rope dangling from his neck, begged piteously for mercy.

"Come," said the leader, "let us leave it to the next man that comes in sight. If he asks for his pardon we will give it."

And Amri, with his life as it were in the unknown's hand, watched pitifully. He came at length—a gallant horseman cantering briskly along.

"Hello, stranger, just a word with you," called the leader; "take a look at this fellow, and tell us what to do with him."

The stranger turned carelessly, but suddenly his eye lighted up with a steely glitter.

"I said I should know you when I saw you again! By Heaven, men, he stole our only boat and left a whole party of women and children to perish on a desert island! The pitiful scoundrel! It's only his deserts that he will get."

It was the captain of the Indian steamer, and this was the strange retribution that came about.

At Blenkarne Terrace the rolling days brought new brightness, and the nearest grief that came was when Frank Osborne, entering into possession of the veritable fortune that he had once so manfully resigned (for the ship that took out his uncle and wife and child went down at night and was never heard from again), took from them his fair young bride and bore her away to his luxurious home.

The world had its eight-day wonder over the romantic story, and the new legend the Exeter folks told over to the rising generation rivalled that of the most wonderful of fairy lore till it was known everywhere as—the Blenkarne Inheritance.

THE END.

THE new air machine was in operation for the first time last month in the House of Commons. By means of this apparatus a constant supply of air, cooled to any required degree even in the warmest weather, can be supplied at the rate of from 60,000 to 90,000 gallons per minute. The house contains about 900,000 gallons of air, so that when the apparatus is working at its maximum it is possible to renew the air without sensible draught every ten minutes.

AN AMERICAN RIVER NILE.—The valley of the Rio Grande del Norte, in New Mexico, recalls the features of the Egyptian Nile. A large population is entirely dependent upon the river. An annual rise of the waters carries a muddy sediment, superior in fertilizing properties, as was proved by analysis, to that of the great African river. While the amount of phosphoric acid is nearly the same, the amount of potash is considerably higher. Thousands of acres are lying idle along the valley of the stream, awaiting the enterprising farmer.

A THOUSAND YEARS AGO.—One of the wonders of the world is demonstrated in the fact that, about a thousand years ago, a colony of Icelanders was planted on the western coast of Greenland. They were a hardy people, inured to cold and meagre living, and there seemed to be no reason why they should not take root in the frozen soil of their new home. They built a stone church there, and stone houses to live in, of which the ruins are still to be seen. But what became of the builders is a question that has never been solved, and never will be. They vanished from the face of the earth, and that is all that is known. Whether cold, or pestilence, or starvation took them off, or whether wandering savages killed them, no man can tell. "Lost Greenland" is the name by which this settlement is known in history, which can solve

this mystery no more than it can tell the ultimate fate of those hapless women banished to Florida by the government years ago.

TRIFLES.—Our lives, or rather their happiness or misery, are in a great measure made up of trifles, just as time is made up of moments. The discomfort of having to wait for a meal beyond its regular hour; of finding this ill-prepared or carelessly done; of meeting slovenliness and discomfort when a little thought and pains might have introduced ease and even elegance; or of being brought up sharp at every turn by want of punctuality—these are ill more difficult to bear than the uninitiated imagine. Most houses might be comfortable and elegant. Yes, elegant! for comfort consists in finding everything where and as it should be; elegance, in adding to what should be there that which need not be there, but whose presence surprises, attracts and gratifies. There is often neither comfort nor elegance in the richer mansions, while both are found in the labourer's cottage. A jug filled with flowers, a neat white curtain, a couple of flower-pots, may effect what the expenditure of hundreds of pounds has not achieved. Let it not be said that these are mere trifles, unworthy of attention. Distrust the pretence of that spirituality whose eyes are too lofty for the common things of life. In the long catalogue of things to think on they rank at any rate among the "whatsoever things are lovely." You say they are trifles! then all the more they ought not to be neglected. But, trifles though they be, to neglect them is not a trifle; it is a breach of plain duty.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

The level bars of sunset gold flooded all the city. From south to north the whole landscape was flushed with gorgeous colour.

One struggling sunbeam penetrated like the shaft of an enemy through the closed shutters of Isabel Vaughan's chamber.

"Rosalie," she called to her maid, in a tired voice, "put down that curtain. Sunlight exasperates me."

"Will mademoiselle be pleased to dress for dinner," said the obsequious French maid, as she arranged the heavy silken drapery of the window, "or will she wait for the evening?"

"Oh, to the ball at Mrs. Stanley's! I had forgotten. It is very tiresome, but I must go. Tell Fleuré to send up a tray for me. I cannot rise yet. Any delicate bit she will do. And you may take out my turquoise satin, and put a frill of point Alençon in the neck, and arrange such flowers as you please for my hair. Don't make me too gay, Rosalie. I shall be triste at best this evening. If my toilet be suited to my mood, therefore, the effect will be all the better."

Rosalie bowed, with a curious little curl upon her French lips, and glided silently out of the apartment, and Isabel buried herself more deeply in the pillows of her couch, and closed her great gray eyes, as if to shut out for ever the glare of day and the thought of worldly vanities.

Isabel had a blow that day. She was twenty-three now, a woman of culture and not without capacity, an heiress, and deservedly a leader in the best—that is, the most refined—intellectual society of the great city. She had been five years out of school, and had seen much of life both in her own country and abroad.

The shallowness and artificiality of the gay world had impressed her from the first, and as year by year she penetrated more and more deeply the shining and well-painted masks which those about her wore she grew more and more weary of the delusion, more and more tempted to exclaim, with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

Coming home from a two-years' sojourn abroad, a year before our story opens, she had found the house on Prospect Hill not yet in readiness, and so had departed for the mountains.

Isabel had lost her mother in her youth. Her father had never married again, and his maiden sister, a woman of quiet manners and the requisite gray hair, presided at his table and played the part of chaperone to Isabel.

Miss Vaughan had gone to the mountains simply to find a quiet retreat from all the world.

It was the autumn, and most of the gay summer travel was over.

The hotels were not crowded, and there were a thousand little out-of-the-way nooks where one might be absolutely alone.

After the Alps and Switzerland the mountains themselves would not greatly fatigue or impress her, she thought, and for a month she meant to find rest for her soul.

But, curiously enough, in these quiet shades she found the most novel, and possibly—who could tell?—the most lasting sensation of her life.

Julian Vane was both artist and man of the world. He had studied in both hemispheres, and had already won for himself an honourable position.

His nature was vigorous and genial, and he had kept the freshness and integrity of his youth better than many men do; yet those who were best acquainted with him knew that there had been an under-current in his life that was not always quite transparent. But, then, ideal perfection is rare, and what would you have?

Strolling among the mountains one sunny October day, it chanced that he encountered Miss Vaughan, who had gone out with a book of poems in her hand, to watch how the golden glow of the afternoon would paint the hills. She had chosen her view-point artistically, and the jutting ledge which she occupied scarcely afforded room for two. When, therefore, she saw the artist approaching, with his sketching materials, she smiled to herself, and said:

"If I remain, I shall perhaps spoil a fine picture. There has not been such an atmosphere as this before this autumn; there may not be another day so perfect. Let me be generous for once."

Aloud to Mr. Vane her speech was, as she rose and gathered her drapery about her:

"Permit me, sir, to make room for you. There is nothing else so fine as this in all the valley, and if you will sketch it, and then allow me the first view of the picture, I shall be greatly your debtor."

He bowed with a finished grace, and answered:

"Thanks," and then, "I am sorry to disturb you, but indeed you should not have chosen your position with so just an eye. I shall be the more happy to submit my picture to your inspection because you have proved yourself beforehand so worthy a critic."

She bowed then and left the spot, and had nearly forgotten the incident, when one day a card was sent to her room.

It bore the name of Julian Vane, and these pencilled lines besides:

"The sketch is finished. At any hour which you may appoint I shall with pleasure submit it for your criticism."

She had learned by this time who the artist was, and knew that his position made the offer a compliment instead of a presumption. She therefore returned a polite reply, and the next day walked down the valley to the little farmhouse where the artist lodged, and whose plainly furnished parlour was now his exhibition-room.

Critical as her eye was, with the culture of faithful study in foreign galleries, the sketch pleased her. In the artist also she recognized something fresh and vigorous and true, and the casual meeting grew into an acquaintance.

They came back together, and before the year closed Julian Vane had asked Isabel Vaughan to be his wife.

Isabel had speculated much about matrimony. She had had many offers, and was well acquainted with the ways of the world. She knew its heartlessness, its superficiality, its cool and mercenary calculations. She knew that wealthier men and men of longer pedigree might be hers for the asking, but somehow, having no fear of want, she did not value either wealth or hereditary position as a thoroughbred society woman should do.

Vane was neither gross, nor shallow, nor foppish; neither, with his artistic tastes, did she believe that he could have many vices. He could talk with her about books, about paintings, about historic scenes, with intelligence and enthusiasm. That was better, she thought, than to be rich and of ancient lineage, and yet stupid. So, after some hesitation, Isabel yielded her consent, and the engagement was announced.

A happy time succeeded. Isabel, though often called stately and cold, and though she was in reality far from possessing an impetuous disposition, was deeply and truly affectionate. An only child, and motherless at that, it was much to her to feel a community of interests with one friendly and congenial soul. She consulted him about her dresses, and he confided to her his dreams about pictures. They read the last new books together, and she learned the secret of a rare confection because it pleased his palate.

This wooing time was so happy a time that neither was in haste to marry. She waited till her house should be built and furnished to her liking; he said, laughingly, that he should not dare to marry till his great picture was finished. It would never do to run the risk of having his genius dissipated by the mild insanity of the honeymoon.

The subject of this great picture was the only secret which Vane kept from his promised bride. Everything else in his studio she might see and criticize as much as she pleased, but his great picture he wished to keep as a surprise for their wedding-day. He had been years about it. In fact it had been commenced while he was abroad. He should finish

it during the autumn, and before the new year they would be married.

Isabel often pretended to be teased by this mystery, but she was in reality pleased by it.

Their tastes were so alike, the confidence between them so perfect, that she often thought that, but for some innocent artifice like this, their courtship might grow commonplace; so he made mystery, and she pretended indignation, and both were never better satisfied than when thus engaged.

But in the autumn day upon which our story opens Isabel had gone upon a shopping excursion. Coming home she betook herself of stopping at the studio, to invite Julian to lunch with her, and discuss the last new book, which she had just purchased.

Entering the studio, she was surprised to find that, though the door was not fastened, the artist was absent.

He could not be far away; most probably had stepped into some neighbouring studio, and would return in a moment.

But here upon the easel was his great picture. The thought that it was his great picture did not immediately occur to her.

The scene was familiar; she recognized it at once, and was joyfully tracing out each well-known detail before it occurred that this was the secret which was to have been kept from her. Even then she only laughed.

"It doesn't matter," she said to herself. "I have won a joke on him, that is all," and so she seated herself before the easel, and gave herself up to the contemplation of the picture.

It was an out-door scene—the old square of the Hôtel de Ville in Brussels. Its quaint and sombre architecture, the frowning stone façades, embellished with gargoyles and griffins wrought by the interloping Spaniard, had been her study for many an hour. For, while most travellers had engrossed themselves with the parks and the Madeleine, she had been glad to steal away from the fashionable crowd and linger amid the shadows of old Broodhuis, and recall the turbulent scenes which had been enacted in its square. Here the chivalrous Lamoral of Egmont and the brave Admiral Werne had courageously faced death because they had loved country more than king. From these old balconies William of Orange, William the Silent, Father William, the great Netherland hero, the grandest figure of his century, had appeared before the raging multitudes below, and by a few calm and golden exhortations had subdued their turbulence and bound their hearts anew to the cause of civil and religious liberty. Below these storied walls the artist had well portrayed the brilliant and picturesque street, with its shifting crowd, its painted booths, its quaint costumes and strong colouring.

Isabel was more than pleased with the picture. For a half-hour she did not think of tiring as she gazed, but at the end of that time her eye, glancing off the canvas, encountered upon a neighbouring easel the picture of a little Flemish maiden. There was something so lifelike and individual about the face that she felt at first that it must be a portrait. The girl held a marguerite in her hand, and somehow the flower exactly stood for her face, white, calm, a true token of simplicity, yet holding after all a heart of truest gold.

The picture was lovingly painted, faithful in every detail, and Isabel, albeit she knew very well the necessities and the vagaries of an artist's life, felt a sudden pang of jealousy dart through her bosom as she noted the crisp white cap, the low bodice, and round white bosom, scarcely shaded by its modest frill.

"He might have painted the dimpled face and the golden hair," she said to herself, "because they struck his fancy; but he never did all those minute details, so faithfully and well, for any other reason than because it was pleasant to his heart to linger over the picture."

She grew uneasy and longed for the artist's return.

Rising, she strolled about the studio, and presently her restless feet carried her behind a screen which concealed one corner of the room. And here a new revelation met her eye. A canvas hung against the wall which she had never seen before. It was still the Broodhuis, the grand square. But this time the architectural details were secondary. The scene was a little stand of fruit and flowers—great clove carnations and lovely Alençon roses and peaches and apricots, improved by southern suns, and full of the fire and flavour of the south, and great Flemish pears, mild and juicy, sweet and luscious, as only Flemish pears can be; violets were there that might have grown in the Forest of Ardenne, and fragrant gray lavender that was undeniably the product of some thrifty Flemish garden.

And over this rare array of tempting fruits and

flowers presided the same gentle, tender, timid Brabant beauty who had sat for the portrait outside. The face had a brighter look now than before. She was intent on custom and studious to please; yet over all there was the same innocence, the same trusting, guileless spirit.

"It is a Gretchen face," said Isabel. "Alas! had she ever a Faust?"

She went back to the great picture then. The fruit stand, with its rustic Flora and Pomona all in one, was nowhere to be seen. Every trace of it had been eliminated from the canvas, yet none the less was Isabel certain that in the face of the little Flemish beauty had lain the spell which had called the great picture into being.

It seemed to her in that moment that she would have given all she was worth in the world to know the true story of that little flower girl.

While she mused Vane entered.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with a gaiety that was still tinged with regret, "so you have surprised my secret? That was not fair in you."

The speech was an unfortunate one.

"Is it not true," she answered, a little reproachfully, "that I have surprised more than one secret? Tell me the story of the little flower girl, will you not?"

She had meant to seem indifferent, but her tone betrayed her. It was full of suspicion and anxiety.

"Ah!" he said, "you distrust me. Is that like you, Isabel?"

"But is not this little Flemish Gretchen a portrait?"

"And if it were?"

"Then there must be a story about her, and it is precisely that which I wish to know."

"But suppose I should say that it was not a story which it would benefit you to hear?"

She looked at him in a helpless silence, not quite certain if he really meant to refuse her.

"Isabel," he said, "cannot you have confidence in me?"

"I fear not, if you refuse to trust me."

It was most unfortunate. To her mind the honour of womanhood was involved; to him the honour of manhood not less.

"You mean to make your love an inquisition?" he asked.

"I ask no questions which a gentleman ought not to be willing to answer."

He mused a moment in a regretful silence.

"Isabel, you knew very well when you gave me your promise that I was a man of the world. I made no pretence of being better than my kind. Does it therefore follow that you must go back over my past life, and ferret out all its buried secrets?"

She was silent. He had told her the truth, and it bore down very hard upon her.

"And you will not tell me about this flower girl?"

He knew what the question involved. He answered, deliberately:

"If you had asked me at first, and unsuspectingly, I should have told you all; but you choose to raise a question of my integrity. I do not choose to be so questioned by any human being, least of all by the woman who has my future happiness in her keeping."

"You bring the question, then, to a point-blank issue? Will I trust you, in spite of your distrust of me?"

"I do not like the way you state it; but you seem to comprehend the issue."

He was very pale about the lips, and there was a hectic flush upon her face, but both were calm to all outward seeming.

She was silent for a moment.

"And this is all you have to say?" she said, at length.

He did not answer.

She held out her hand; she would not part with him in anger. He took it, and then she said, sorrowfully, and with deep feeling:

"Good-bye."

He could not speak, he simply bowed, and, following her to her carriage, handed her in, and gave her order to the driver:

"Home."

And she went home, and buried herself among the pillows of her couch. Not to sleep, not to weep; simply to interrogate her own soul.

How much did she love this man, and how much did she love truth? It had never seemed to her that she had been "in love" with him, as school-girls phrase it. They had tastes in common, sympathies in common, and she respected him. She had therefore taken him into a nearness to her own life such as she had never accorded to any man before.

If her love had been a sentiment, a passion, it seemed to her that she could have wrestled with it more hopefully. But it had become the habit of her life. It was a living growth, having its roots

twined about all the commonplaces of her daily living, its tendrils clasped inextricably with all her comings and goings. It would cost her, not one sudden and sharp pang, she knew, but many weary months of laceration and then of healing, before she should recover from the uprooting of it. Was it wise? Was it worth while? Should she ever find any friend to suit her so well who would be more unexceptionable in character?

She had gotten so far as this when Rosalie entered.

With Rosalie daily life broke into her musings with its inevitable commonplaces. There was the dance. She had promised, and must go.

She ate her solitary dinner lazily, and then resumed her inquisition; but when Rosalie came in to dress her she had decided the question. Vane was sure to be at the ball. Indeed, she had promised to lead it off with him. How should she meet him?

But modern society etiquette allows for no great play of the feelings. She met him easily, scarcely pausing in her chat with Mr. Armsby, and when he came to claim her hand for the dance went through her part of the performance just as she always did, with a grace and dignity that were irreproachable. And that was all.

When the dance was over she left him just as carelessly as she had joined him, to take an ice with an old friend, whom she met for the first time during some years.

But Vane was not quite easy in his mind, the less so for this very indifferent manner of his lady-love. He would have preferred her to be cold, or even haughty. He knew well that Isabel had not forgotten the event of the morning. If she had already steeled herself to this impassiveness, it might be the worse for him.

An hour later he found her in the music-room, looking weary and spiritless.

"You are fatigued," he said. "Is there any service which I can offer you?"

"None," she replied, languidly. "I shall go home soon."

"Shall I order your carriage?"

"No, thank you; Mr. Ormsby will do that."

It was no time to re-open any controversy. Her manner was not inviting, and she looked weary.

"Isabel," he said, "may I call and see you tomorrow?"

"You must come to-morrow, if at all. I sail for the Continent on Saturday."

It was a sudden blow, but he simply grew blanched and was silent.

"No chance for any word of reconciliation?" he faltered, at length.

"Yes, every chance for the word I most desire to hear."

"But, Isabel, I fear you would not understand the truth."

She curled her lip scornfully. It was the first intimation of feeling which she had manifested.

"Mr. Vane," she said, at length, "all this is highly improper. It is impossible that I should listen to wordy explanations upon this theme. True or false? guilty or not guilty? that is the simple question between us. You cannot speak the word which I confess I should be glad to hear. I have questioned my own soul, and I know what lies beyond. I did not know until to-day how much I valued integrity in a man. I had never thought of it. I am reduced to a cruel necessity. It may be—nay is—very hard for me to part from you, but it would be harder still to live on, every confidence, every tenderness between us stung with blackness and blight by the ever-obtruding thought of this innocent-looking flower girl, who is not—you will not deny that—a flower girl any longer. This is not conventional reasoning, I am aware, but unfortunately, I am not exactly a conventional woman. I shall always think of you kindly—I doubt if I shall ever forget this vanished dream—yet for all that I have only one word to say, and that is, goodbye."

Vane was silent. There was something in the woman's nature which awed him; and then he loved her very tenderly, more tenderly than he himself had dreamed until this moment, and he knew that what she had said was true. It was, for aught that he could do to help it, an irrevocable blight, an ineradicable mildew which had settled upon her love. But he did so wish that she could know the whole truth.

Her carriage was announced at that moment, and he wrapped her, and attended her down the stairs. At the carriage door he kissed her hand, and simply said:

"Good-bye!"

It was a hard night for Isabel, but she lived it through, as we all do live out our hours of grief. She was busy all the next day with her trunks, and on Saturday she started for Italy.

She ensued a winter in Rome, full of study and contemplation and unrest.

One day, in a gallery of the Vatican, she noticed a young woman, an artist, patiently copying a Magdalen of Correggio. It was a face of rare power, and the copyist seemed bent upon reproducing it with the utmost fidelity. Her face was turned partly from Isabel, and for some time the picture only engaged her thoughts. It was growing so lifelike, so perfect under the patient, skilful touch that Isabel was seized with a sudden desire to possess it when it should be completed.

Approaching the artist, she said, in French:

"Pardon me, but will your picture be for sale when it is completed?"

The artist raised her face then, and Isabel was struck with its gentle, placid beauty.

She hesitated before replying.

"Yes, I suppose so," she said, at length; "and yet I confess that I should be glad if it did not find too ready a purchaser. I paint this because I love to paint it. Magdalens are too often repulsive, but this woman was not wholly false."

They fell into a chat about paintings, and at last Miss Vaughan handed the copyist her card, and expressed a desire to form her acquaintance.

"I have no card," said the young woman, smiling, "but I am called Louise Duverez, and I lodge in a little street so far out of the town that mademoiselle would scarcely give herself the trouble to find me. I am every day in the Vatican, however."

"And you must come to see me at my lodging," said Isabel. "I want to talk with you about pictures, and I want you also to promise me that when this Magdalen is completed, and you are quite ready to part with it, I may be allowed to purchase it."

"Thanks," said Louise, with a bright smile. "Mademoiselle hardly knows the favour her words are to a friendless girl who has only her art."

The two young women met again often, and a very sweet and tender friendship grew up between them. They visited picture galleries together; they sought out rare statuary. Louise, from long acquaintance in Rome, knew where the finest collections of gems and antiquities were to be found, and Isabel learned more in one month by her aid than she could have accomplished in a year without it.

At last spring came, and Miss Vaughan set her face homeward. There came over her then a nameless longing to see once more the old square in Brussels. She would not stand, as she had been used to do, in its quaint little booths and dream of Mary of Burgundy, of the Duke of Alva, of the Duchess Margaret, and the brilliant and brave but ill-fated Don John of Austria; but she would go back to the well-known corner, and inquire the fate of the pretty Gretchen who had once sold her peaches and apricots, her roses and carnations, under the shadow of the Broodhuis.

"You go then to Brussels," said Louise, one day, when Isabel had been talking over with her future plans. "Ah! I love Brussels too. I was very happy there once. I learned my art in Brussels."

She leaned her head upon her hand, and as the rippling gold of her hair fell over her round and rosy face Isabel was startled by a familiar expression. She could not trace it at the moment, for she was thinking how little she really knew of this young woman, to whom she had given so unreservedly her friendship.

"Louise," she said, "tell me your history. You are French, are you not?"

"Miss Vaughan," said Louise, "I almost fear to tell you, and yet I ought to have told you long ago. I hardly know what I am, except that I was born in the province of Artois, and sprang from the people. My first remembrance is of the Ardennes wood which your Shakespeare has made immortal, and of my childish delight in its lovely glades and fine old trees. When I was very young my father went to Brussels. We had a little garden patch outside the gates, and I sold fruit and flowers in the square. It seems a long way from that to an artist's brush and palette, does it not?"

Miss Vaughan was listening breathlessly.

"Will you tell me?" she said, hoarsely, "if you ever knew one Julian Vane?"

Louise's face flushed scarlet. She did not answer her for a moment. Some sudden intuition seemed to possess her with a knowledge of Miss Vaughan's relation to the man who had been the central figure of her own life.

"Yes," she said at length, in a low tone, "I have known Julian Vane. Is he your friend, dear Isabel?"

Miss Vaughan had covered her face with her hands, and tears were streaming through her fingers. Louise knelt by her side.

"Dear Miss Vaughan," she said, "I am not worthy to ask the cause of your sorrow, but may it not be possible that I may in some measure allay it? I



[THE ORIGINAL OF THE PORTRAIT.]

never thought to tell you my story. I thought our friendship would be for a day, for a season, and then it would pass away, and there was no need that I should pain myself or you with all the sad details of my past. But since I see you weep when you mention Julian Vane I must tell you what he has been to me."

Miss Vaughan's face was still averted, but Louise went on.

"I told you," she said, "that in my earliest girl-hood I was a little flower girl in the square at Brussels. You know the lives such girls lead. They are innocent at first, but they have only a simple faith and native goodness to stand between them and all the temptations to which they are exposed. Their lives are hard and poor and barren, and there are nobles and gentlemen abroad ready to offer them love, or what seems like it to their inexperience, and a life of ease and glitter besides. Well, I thank Heaven, I never took the gold, but for love I did one day barter my good name."

Isabel turned herself away coldly.

"Nay, mademoiselle," cried the ardent girl, "be not too hard with me. You cannot know my trial; you cannot know how thoroughly I was deceived. Heaven knows that in my innocence and inexperience of life I was as utterly unconscious of wrong as ever a woman was. I thought myself his wife. He told me that I was, and how should I know that he was false?"

Isabel turned upon her then.

"Do you mean to tell me," she said, "that Julian Vane is a traitor like that?"

"No. Good Heavens, no; what have I said to make you for an instant believe it?" said Louise. "It was Julian Vane who rescued me when I was cast off, starving, dying, in the streets of Brussels, not knowing how to live, and yet with no way to earn my bread. He painted my picture first—just to amuse me, though, and keep me from utter despair—painted it as he had seen me the year before, when I stood at my fruit-stand in the square. He was my kind friend, my brother, my good angel. He taught me my art, and carried me with him to Paris, and established me there."

"Oh, madam," she went on, "believe me, Julian Vane may have been wild, as young men are, but he never was a cold-blooded villain. It is not possible. Cannot you, who are his peer and equal, read him? Why I, a simple little peasant girl, know better than here that—"

Isabel was sobbing like a child, and Louise, seeing that she no longer treated her coldly, clung to her and strove to comfort her.

"Dear Isabel," she said, "will you not speak to me? Will you not, it may be, tell me what your trouble is, that I may at least sympathize with you?"

"Oh, Louise," said Isabel, at length, "I do not know if it be in the power of any human being to give me back my lost past, but at least you have restored my faith in human nature, my lost ideal."

Briefly she confided to her friend the story of the Gretchen picture.

"Ah! I see," said Louise, a little sadly, "I have grown so unlike that picture which used to be thought a marvellous likeness that you did not recognize me. Ah! well, Time lays his fingers upon us all."

"It is not time, it is life," said Isabel. "You are no longer the little flower girl of Brussels; you are Mademoiselle Devereux of Rome. It is that which makes all the difference in the world."

"But how are you to make glad the heart of my friend?" said Louise, simply. "I cannot bear that he should suffer such a loss through my poor picture and all his goodness to me. Will you not that I should write to him upon the morrow?"

"No," said Isabel, "at least not yet. I must think for a while."

Ah! and Louise sighed a little sigh, "you ladies who have all that your hearts crave are so fastidious. Now, I think I could not rest, if I were you, till the green billows of the ocean were bearing him a letter, at least to say that you have judged him wrongly. You need say only that, you know."

"Louise, you little sophist," said Isabel, smiling, "as if you did not know that that would be saying all."

"Well, at any rate, let us go to Brussels together," said Louise. "There is so much that I want to show you there."

A little sophist she might be, but she had no intention of leaving her friend until she had seen her happiness secured.

They went to Brussels, and one bright May morning they stood in the square where Louise had sold the fruit and flowers in her youth.

"This is the place," said Louise. "It was just here that—"

She paused, for at that instant Isabel's face grew suddenly as pale as marble, and then flushed again as rosy as the carnation which she held in her hand. Louise looked in the direction of her glace, and gave one sudden scream.

"Good morning, Isabel," said Julian Vane. "I knew you would come sooner or later to this spot. Six months I have waited for you here. I could not

rest till I knew that you had at least done me justice. After that I have nothing else to say."

"Have you—have you nothing else to say?" said Louise. "Then I think you are very wrong."

"But, Louise," he said, offering her his hand in the most cordial manner, "how does it happen that you are here? This is more than I bargained for."

"I am here," she said, "because you saved me once, and now I have been able to make you a return."

But Vane would not understand her too-evident meaning. He only said simply to Isabel:

"May I walk with you to your hotel?"

Her voice trembled as she gave the required permission.

Louise had imperative business in another direction, and left the lovers by themselves.

"Julian," said Isabel, feeling that something was required of her, "why did you suffer me to be so deceived? You could so easily have cleared yourself, and yet you would not. Was that generous?"

"Dear Isabel," he said, "a woman knows her power. I had not thought much about the matter of my wild young days until your sudden question sent my glance inward, and then I knew that, though I was innocent of this particular offence, I was not what your heart required. And so to-day, though I am, I trust, a better man for the discipline of the last half-year, yet I dare not—"

She looked up to him with an appealing glance.

"Oh, Julian," she said, "what am I, what is weak human nature at the best, that it should constitute itself the judge of offences that have been repented of? Your goodness to this one poor lost, forsaken child is all that I choose to remember."

She shyly offered him her hand, and he pressed it fervently to his lips.

When Louise entered her congratulations were no longer refused.

"And now," said Louise, gaily, "as I am the fairy godmother in this remarkable tale I beg leave to insist upon my rights to plan the finale. You shall be married immediately, right here in this good city of Brussels—in dear old historic Saint Gudule; I shall strew the roses in your pathway, and Henri, who used to carry your sketching apparatus when you went abroad, Vane, shall ring the wedding chimes. You shall spend your summer here, and go home when you please, carrying with you the blessings of the little Flemish flower girl; and the Gretchen shall never be sold, but hang upon your parlour walls for ever and a day."

It was all as Louise had planned, and no happier pair dwelt in the great city than Mr. and Mrs. Julian Vane.

J. W.



[AT FAULT.]

FAIR ANNE OF CLY. THE STORY OF A LIFE'S AMBITION.

CHAPTER XVI.

Of all sad words of tongue or pen
The saddest are these: "It might have been."

Whittier.

WILL DARIAN could have fairly hugged the girl when she brought down word that the lady would see him. He went up the stairs four at a time; outside the room door he came to a full stop, and waited while the maid gave notice of his presence.

His gigantic frame shook all over when he stepped into the room. It was hard work for him to control a passionate burst of fervent words. But it was well he did not give way to his feelings or he might have been in a worse dilemma than he already found himself in.

The lady he confronted was not Kate Lynn.

Poor Will! how he stepped back, abashed and crestfallen. Even tears started to his great eyes, so sad and sudden and so greatly unexpected was the disappointment.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he stammered, turning red and white. "But there must be some mistake."

The lady, very little less surprised than himself, got up from the easy-chair and stood near the fireplace, supporting herself by resting one hand on the mantelpiece.

She was a handsome woman, about five or six-and-twenty, elegant in figure and evidently a lady.

"You sent up for me, sir," she said.

"I asked for Miss Lynn."

"Lynn? My name is Lenn. There must be some unfortunate mistake, for how could you be aware of the circumstance that I was picked up at sea?"

"Mistake!" groaned Will. "The lady I am in search of was wrecked in a yacht, and I understood picked up by the 'North Star.'"

"That is the vessel I was on board of, and I too had been cast into the sea out of an open sailing boat. As yet I know not whether my relation and the sailors were saved."

"Lady," said Will, unable to restrain the great emotion that rendered him faint—almost speechless, "glad as I am to hear that you have been saved from so fearful a death, I cannot conceal the sad disappointment occasioned by the circumstances of this strange meeting, for now I am more impressed that the lady whom I am in search of is lost to me for ever."

Miss Lenn looked at the sorrowful, pale face of Will with much pity.

"You must not entirely despair," she said, kindly; "she may have been saved as I was saved, and taken in another direction."

"I fear not," said Will Darian, shaking his head sadly, "I should have heard of her before now had she been rescued."

"Even as you are now lamenting the loss of Miss Lynn, so are my relations sorrowing for me," said the lady, and Will felt grateful to her for the encouraging words; but he was afraid to hope that Kate may have been rescued. "Let us hope for the best. The lady may be home by the time you return, as I shall arrive perhaps when my friends have given me up in hopeless despair."

"I would that I could think as you do, but I have a presentiment that she is gone for ever."

And the young fellow turned his head to hide the tears that dimmed his eyes.

"Take courage; they say there is hope while there is life, and there is time enough for despair when you have heard the worst, if it is the worst you must hear."

"Ah," said Will, with a deep-drawn sigh, "it is only that fear of learning the worst that keeps me from hoping for the best. Should Providence have been merciful and saved her from the awful fate I anticipate she has met with it will be a happiness I had dared not think of; while, on the other hand, should I lure myself on with the hope that she lives, and then learn that she has perished, the disappointment would be more than I could endure."

"Then dwell not on either hope or despair, but make your search as though you were searching for something you were uncertain of finding," suggested the lady. "I am sure you will find her. I was saved, why should she not be?"

"True," Will answered. "I shall not rest until I have found her or learnt the truth of her disappearance."

"I hope that your next inquiry will prove as happy a surprise as this has proved a sad disappointment."

"I pray Heaven it may," responded Will. "If I can be of any service to you I shall be most happy. The unfortunate accident from which you have just escaped must leave you in a most awkward situation so far from your home, therefore I trust you will allow me to assist you in any way you may require."

"I thank you very much for your kind offer," said the lady, with a smile of sweet gratitude. "But I have happily procured the services of a young person who will do all I require."

Will Darian then gave her his name and address, and saying that he hoped his parents and sister

would have the pleasure of seeing her, he withdrew, and descended the stairs with a much heavier heart and a heavier step than he had ascended them a few minutes before.

Nixon saw the instant his young master entered the room that something had gone wrong with him.

"Seen her, Mr. William?" he asked.

"No," answered Will Darian, gloomily.

Nixon drained the glass that stood before him, and then, taking out the thin slice of lemon that clung to the side, he held it between his thumb and finger and sucked it, meditatively watching his master the while.

"Wouldn't she let you in?" he inquired, having failed to assign any cause why the lady had not seen his master.

"It was not her."

"Not her!" and Nixon, jumping up in his surprise, swallowed the slice of lemon.

Not his young mistress!

Nixon felt the deep disappointment in all its full force, and his appetite for whisky-and-water vanished without giving him sufficient warning to take what little remained in his glass. Matters were becoming terribly grave now, and it was with a painful sense of dread he contemplated having to return home to his master with the tidings that all hope was useless.

Will Darian was silent and gloomy. He could not quite understand the affair from the beginning. Kate Lynn had seemed too open-minded and honest-hearted a girl to wilfully and wickedly deceive her parents.

"I could understand her," he thought, "starting up and asserting her right to choose a man to her own liking, whether she offended or pleased any one, dear or not, that's more of her style, but to sneak off with the very man Lynn had forbidden the house was not like Kate. What could she know of him? I never heard of him till she went."

Simple-hearted Will had some notion that he knew or thought he knew all Squire Lynn's affairs, not seeing that his secretly nourished affection for Kate Lynn had made him so childishly sensitive and timid that he estranged himself with the Lynns more than with the vicar.

Since he had first discovered that the tender passion had laid siege to his heart, and that Kate Lynn was perhaps the unconscious agent, he had worshipped her at a distance, always fearing lest a word or look should betray his secret—a catastrophe the bare thoughts of which filled him with a curious kind of dread. Truly, love had made a child of Will, at least in the presence of her he loved, and a very timid one too.

Now that perhaps he had lost her for ever he

began to wonder why he had never spoken to her upon the subject, why he had not made his love known. He had not been without hope. No, but he had been behind, he thought, and thought of it with bitterness now that he recalled the many distinct little attentions Kate Lynn had paid to him in the most marked manner.

No matter how useless regret may be, it is hard to stifle it down. There is no substitute for regret, it is a human sentiment that stands alone, and though it comes only to taunt us for some errors it often teaches a sad and sober lesson for the future. If there is a man who can look back upon past misdeeds or actions that have left their sting of care and trouble without regret we pity him, for his must be a nature that can glide negligently down the streams of folly and vice without making an effort to strand on a sandbank of honour or struggle for the brighter banks of virtue.

Will regretted his past folly deeply, and went towards the railway station in moody silence. His faithful servant Nixon took the tickets for Sefton, and in a few minutes they were being whirled along on their journey with bewildering rapidity.

Will Darian lay back in the carriage, and at heart and despairing in thoughts. He tried to think hopefully, but an amate feeling, a dark foreboding, stole upon him and filled him with a dread apprehension that he was going to see Miss Lynn, not as he had seen her in the happy times gone by, but as she appeared before him now in his mind's eye—cold, pallid, and beautiful as ever, but with that melancholy beauty of death upon her, dragged from a watery grave, lying unknown perhaps amidst a number of other stark and disfigured bodies awaiting to be claimed by their bereaved relatives.

Nixon watched him for some minutes, and feeling uneasy at the motionless attitude and strange expression of Will Darian's eyes he spoke to arouse him, but the young farmer needed him not, he was lost to all about him, buried in a profound reverie of his own sad thoughts.

"Can't make it out why people should take things so to heart," Nixon cogitated, "it ain't wise. I never go on like that; it's best to drive care away, but I don't like to see him like that, it brings a lump in my throat."

And turning to the carriage window Nixon drew his hand across his eyes to brush away a tear. He tried to hum a song, but his voice quivered so much that it put him all out of tune, so he gave it up and amused himself by drawing curious figures on the glass with his finger. He got tired of this soon, and letting the window down, he seemed suddenly to find an absorbing attraction in the beauties of the country through which they passed.

The sun, fading out in lurid splendour, imparted a number of magic hues to the glorious scenes of nature, while the shadows of approaching night drew a dark veil over the earth and lent a beauty to each view that is only seen in the sunset of an autumn eve.

It was evident that Nixon had seen but little of nature's beauty during the journey. It was dark before they arrived at Sefton, and when the train drew up at the platform he still stood at the window with the same vacant stare in his eyes.

The porter's voice caused him to start, and, looking about him in a bewildered sort of way that proved he had no idea of where he was, he called to the guard to inquire.

"Yes, this is Sefton," answered that functionary. "Going to get out here? Because make haste, the train's off again."

Nixon, in a state of exultation, shook Will Darian with less gentleness than politeness.

"Here we are, Mr. William," he said, taking down the young farmer's hat and putting it on his head.

"Is this Sefton?" asked Will, with the anxiety and confusion of a man who has suddenly awoke from a slumber to find himself being whirled out of the station where he intended to alight.

Before Nixon could answer Will Darian's question they were startled by hearing some one shout:

"Eight behind there!"

And then the guard's whistle gave the signal for starting, and was instantly answered by a shrill shriek from the engine.

"Hi! come!" yelled Nixon, jumping out of the carriage and dragging Will Darian after him as the train moved off.

"We were only just in time," remarked Nixon, recovering his good temper the moment he found himself safe. "We were very near being taken on to the next station."

"Ah," said Will. "We should have had to wait two hours for a train to bring us back in that case."

"We could have got a gig and I could have driven back. Nothing like travelling by road. It's safe and pleasant; you can enjoy the country scenery, and go your journey without the fear—that always upon you when in those confounded trains—of coming into collision or being hurled over an embankment."

"There is not that enjoyment in travelling now there must have been in the days of the old stage coach; but for the convenience of time and commercial purposes trains are a wonderful improvement."

"That may be," said Nixon, who would never acknowledge that trains were better than the old system of travelling; "but them as ain't nothing to do with commerce shouldn't encourage trains, and then we shouldn't have so many of them. Why, in a few years there won't be a mile of country but what 'll have them confounded trains tearing and shrieking all over it, smashing up and killing people in every direction."

Will Darian only smiled.

He was not in the humour for argument, and he thought the best policy was to allow Nixon to enjoy his own opinion.

Nixon did enjoy it silently, when he found that the young farmer was not inclined to enter into the subject of conversation with him.

Will Darian left the outlandish station with Nixon at his heels. He had as yet no distinct purpose in view beyond the hope of hunting down the man who had robbed Squire Lynn's home and made Will's heart desolate.

The quiet inn was not far off. Will being a stranger here was quite content to let Nixon be courier, and he did not make a bad one.

The quaint old tavern soon came in view, and Nixon hailed its appearance with as much delight as did Will, only perhaps with a double motive.

Will only had one, to find the man who had wrought so much ruin, Nixon had that motive too and also an eye to whisky and water.

"Here we are, Mr. William," he said, tossing his hat from the left to the right eyebrow with singular dexterity and precision. "We'll soon find out all about the villain in this quarter."

Nixon appeared quite familiar with the old place and its people. He shook hands with the hostess, nodded affably to the customers who were there, spoke pleasantly to the watermen about boating, and ran upstairs with the freedom of a man who felt himself quite at home, and entertained no other thought but to make himself happy.

Will Darian pioneer him into the coffee-room. A large, cheerful room it was, so homely and comfortable in every respect that the most fastidious person must have felt contented and at his ease instantly on entering it.

The company was quiet and select. At each table there sat four persons playing cards, and others were gathered in little parties engaged in conversation or reading; but there was one there who contrasted strangely with the rest—a tall, handsome, delicate-looking young fellow, who lay stretched along a couch near the fire. His pale, wan face and the painful expression of his sunken eyes bore the impress of mental as well as bodily suffering.

Nixon was remarkably struck by his appearance. He drew a chair up at the other side of the fireplace, and fixed his gaze upon the invalid with a searching, uncertain expression, and pondered as though trying to recall to mind where and when he had seen that face before.

Will Darian's mind was engrossed by the melancholy subject of his lost love.

Without scarcely noticing any one in the room he had seated himself at the window, and there he watched the boisterous waves as they rose in majestic grandeur, rolled up the beach, and retired with a hissing roar as though in anger at not having dragged another victim into the insatiable depth of the ocean.

"Mr. William!" Nixon suddenly exclaimed, with an energy that startled every one in the room.

Will sprang up.

He saw the groom standing over the couch; his face was red and hot with excitement, and he wondered what had caused the change in the imperturbable Nixon.

"That's him!" cried the latter. "I thought I knew him when I first came in, I am sure on it now!"

"Whom do you mean?" asked Will.

"The Honourable George Clancourdy, the villain who ran away with my young mistress."

Will Darian uttered a cry, and sprang at the man.

At this display of seeming insolence several persons in the room got up to interfere on behalf of the Hon. Clancourdy, whose pale, handsome face created much sympathy and many defenders for him; and poor Will Darian was instantly abused for his cowardly conduct, as the looker-on termed it, towards a man unable to defend himself.

Nixon thought he saw indications of a disturbance in which his active services would be required.

"You don't know nothing about it, none of you," he said, with a warning shake of his head that jerked his hat from the left side to the right, and elbowed his way through to Will's side, where he took up a determined position, and trod heavily on the toes of those who were nearest to him.

Clancourdy rose slowly from the couch; he was so weak that he fell back twice in the attempt, and when he stood up he was compelled to hold the table for support. He tried hard to speak, but his voice refused utterance, and Will Darian, carried beyond self-control at seeing the man before him who had been the cause of all his unhappiness, made an impetuous movement towards him.

"Speak, villain," he cried, "where is Miss Lynn, what have you done with her?"

"I know not," the Honourable Clancourdy answered, so faintly that the words were scarcely audible.

"Villain!" Will exclaimed, in startling frenzy. "You stole her from her home, and you have murdered her."

"No, no. I have not murdered her," Clancourdy faltered, painfully agitated.

"Then what have you done with her?" continued Will, terribly excited, and even Nixon looked serious for a moment.

"I cannot tell you, man," Clancourdy answered, remorsefully. "Take me, do what you like with me, but in pity's sake do not accuse me of her murder. Heaven! if she were here. Gladly would I have sacrificed my life to have saved hers!"

If Will Darian had entertained a doubt of Kate Lynn's death it vanished at the utterance of Clancourdy's last words.

For a few moments he stood speechless, and the painful working of his features told of the struggle going on within him.

"Go, Nixon, and fetch a constable," he said, at length, and as the groom left the room with a sort of half-skip and a jump he turned to Clancourdy and continued: "You shall answer for this outrage, this fearful murder of an innocent girl, with your life."

"Mr. Darian," said Clancourdy, humbly, "I ask not for mercy, but give me justice. If I have been the cause of this lamentable occurrence, Heaven knows it is unintentionally."

At that moment Nixon returned, followed by two official-looking men in plain clothes, detectives they were who had been engaged by Squire Lynn to investigate the case and discover the abductor of his daughter.

They were standing at the bar when Nixon came downstairs, and on hearing him ask the hostess where he could find a constable they inquired what he wanted one for; on being told they said who they were and followed him upstairs.

"You are the gentleman we have been looking for," said one, producing a pair of handcuffs and advancing towards the Hon. Clancourdy with as little respect as they would have shown to a drunken fellow.

They made no distinction either for the nature of the offence or the position of the offender.

"That is unnecessary," objected Clancourdy, indignantly, "I shall not attempt to escape, you may rest assured."

But the detectives said it was a necessary precaution and indispensable, and but for the intercession of Will Darian he would have put them on the Hon. George Clancourdy's delicate wrists by force.

A half-hour later he was being conveyed a prisoner to Cly, an inner voice whispered a warning of hope that if he again sought the quaint little fishing hamlet by sundown he might learn something of his lost idol. The ill-fated vessel that had been swallowed by the hungry, remorseless sea had started from this shore—might not these amber-tinted sands yet give up some token of the lost one? It was a wild thought, but he was irresistibly drawn back, his heart yearning to stay where she had last been and where he had learnt the first sad news which came like a blight upon him.

The weather had changed again. The sea, hungry and furious, once more was roaring for fresh prey, the wind came in fitful, tempestuous gusts, sobbing and moaning like an unruly spirit of darkness suddenly let loose to devastate at will, and only too anxious to begin the work of destruction.

The inmates of the fishing village had turned out—that is those who were not away on the turbulent waves, or those too old, too young, or too feeble-minded to scan the surf-girt shore and await the return of their little boats and sturdy companions or draw the smacks already stranded higher up on the beach out of reach of the cruel, destructive waves.

Sea and clouds seemed to hang together in sullen intercourse, while the wind blew a gale and the leaden-coloured clouds began to perspire huge rain drops. Some of the oldest hands, and those too most weatherwise, prophesied a fearful night of tempest, and many a yearning, anxious heart was offering up a silent, fervent prayer for sturdy mariners with nothing to save them from an appalling death but the frail, tempest-tossed barques out in that awe-inspiring solitude.

To the foam-covered beach Will Darian works his way.

This wild night has a vivid infatuation for him; it was such a night as this that rent asunder the tiny vessel that bore away from all who were dear to her the woman of his heart-love.

A fishing-smack had just come in and was being hauled up high and dry. Her crew, soaking wet and covered with the brine in spite of their heavy oil-skin, top-boots and sou'-westers, were standing with their faces turned towards the sea, their eyes vainly searching for another of their craft, one, Will heard them say, that had been driven out to the south coast in the recent gale, and which was labouring slowly homeward, disabled, with shattered sails and wrecked spars.

They had hailed her, but could not render assistance then, their own vessel made too much water, and in another hour would have rolled unmanageable in the trough of the sea.

"She oughter be near now," said the master, "she was running straight for the shore. I learn that she'd picked up some one, a lady wrecked near the south coast."

A lady!

Will was in the centre of this little group in a moment.

"A lady?" he asked; had they learned no more particulars?

"This generous frien'" explained old Seagail, "is a-looking arter news of a lady friend of his'en wot were wrecked in the 'Antelope' cutter yacht."

The smack-master turned a sympathizing glance towards Will, his weather-beaten face bore rugged signs of tender pity.

"Maybe 'twas the same," he murmured, "but we shall soon know."

Boom!

Faint, dull and hollow came the sound, like a solitary blow on a big drum born upon the winds.

A minute gun at sea!

Some trader in distress, but not in sight. Who should say what may not happen to her? Who should say what her crew may not be suffering?

The signal died away and a profound silence reigned over the blackening sea.

No one could better read the warning of that single gun-report than these danger-inured men. To them it conjured up a picture at once of some water-logged, mastless vessel drifting helplessly on, with the waters washing her decks clean, and perhaps carrying away the men—men perhaps who had been clinging, madly, despairingly, to the upper rigging, praying for their lives for the sake of those at home, and knowing that there was no rest for them short of the fathomless bottom below, and saw no refuge above nearer than the heavens, and the wind, at times so fair and gentle to the children of the ocean, but waiting now to turn their murderer.

A loud cry arose from the hazy shore. Something black and more solid than the blackening mist rises for a moment on the top of a mountain billow, but only for a moment, then it sinks more rapidly than it rose and is carried on—the men not knowing whither, being blinded by the mist and spray, and tricked by the compass that has turned traitor in the hour of peril—or into the trackless solitude, or to the bottom.

Every ear is strained to catch another sound from the helpless wreck, but nothing is heard save the roar of water and the bluster of the wind. Every eye is strained to catch another glimpse of the black mass, but nothing is seen save the white-capped billows and the still-lowering mist.

The saddened hearts sink, and weary eyes turn inland.

There is some one else amongst the eager groups, not an unfamiliar face nor an unwelcome one. This Will turns to, and beholds a stately figure wrapped in a blue naval cloak.

The men touch their caps in honour of one who has been a leader of men of their own danger-fraught profession—to Admiral Moonlake.

"Good-evening, lads. Seen anything of the vessel that gave signals of distress just now? Tanner, my glasses."

Only for a minute, only a glimpse, is obtained, and then she seemed drifting fair on towards the cliff.

The admiral takes his glasses—large and powerful double glasses, made to penetrate night mists—and eagerly scans the distant sea-line.

"Any of your people out?" he asks.

"Yes, admiral, the 'Swallow.' She's disabled, and got a lady castaway aboard, and—"

"Hilloa!—hang the rain—I see something, lads; something like one of your craft," cries the admiral. "Take my glasses, Hardinge, your eyes are younger than mine."

"Where away, sir?" asks Hardinge, the smack-master but lately returned. "Aha, I see—I see her; it's the 'Swallow'!"

"Ten pounds for every man who will venture out to her rescue," cried Will, excitedly.

"And I'll add five to it," is the sturdy exclamation of the gallant admiral. "Fifteen pounds for every man who'll go out to her, if there's a lady aboard."

Then there is a stir amongst the crowd. The men look at each other. Is there one amongst them who does not know how hopeless the attempt is, how almost certain death awaits them? But it is not the danger they fear, it is the failure they shrink from.

"Mates," and there was no quiver in the rough voice of Hardinge as he spoke, "we can but try. There's the yawl, we may manage her with the sweeps."

Quick as the movement of well-disciplined soldiers, but without hurry or flurry, two parties of men—twelve under Hardinge, eight under Seagail—go each to their respective boat, and they are run down the beach till they touch the hissing spray. The men take their seats and the sweeps.

"All ready?"

"Ay, ready!"

"Give way."

The admiral, Will, and even Nixon lend a hand in the water. The boat is lifted and carried out, the men give a cheer, and those who launched her retire, drenched and blinded.

Seagail's boat is off first, being the lightest, and carried away by a giant wave, which hurls it to another, which eagerly takes it in its gaping mouth as a shark would a crumb. The men struggle bravely and pull like mammoths, but the boat sinks in the chasm of two breaking billows, rises once more, is whirled round like a teetotum, and before those on shore can give vent to a cry of horror the boat comes back to them in pieces, amidst a multitude of broken oars and struggling, whirling human forms.

The fate of this boat does not deter the crew of the yawl. The gallant men only draw themselves up to conquer or die, and call into play every mental and physical nerve to aid them in this moment of dire peril.

The yawl, so much larger and heavier, has a better fight for it. For a short time she leaps from wave to wave, and the men pull her through the furious billows by sheer main force, but she strikes, ships a sea; the men abandon the sweeps for the bailing cups, and she is hurled back upon the hissing sands with the velocity of a ball from a cannon; and all this while the partly wrecked little smack is struggling gallantly for shore, but the waves sport with her as the waves of a wind-tossed river would with a pigmy cork—now sending the water-logged vessel within hearing distance of those on shore, almost near enough for them to throw a line, and then carrying it away again with a wild roar of mocking triumph—away as far as the eye could reach; and might is closing in.

Linger, oh, light! Cease, oh, tempest! Have not these gallant men well earned a respite from their threatened desolate death—with succour so near yet so far—from their reach? Struggle on, oh, brave hearts, for while they beat shall not hope cling to you in life?

The yawl is emptied, the partly stunned men recover themselves, retake their seats, and now once more fight with the merciless tempest. Again these twelve men battle with their monster foe. This time they get farther out, and the sinking smack comes nearer: her men are on deck, waving to their noble friends. The cry is, "Throw a line." A line is thrown, but the wind hurls it out of its path; it misses, and the smack recedes once more and the yawl is engulfed.

When the smack is next hurled in sight a powerful young fisherman is seen to be lashing a fair, inanimate form to a spar, and preparing himself to struggle with it through the surf. It is the last despairing hope. He leaps into the sea as the line is thrown a second time and is caught. Ay, well may you cheer, gallant men, it is a deed of heroes. But success is not yet effected.

All eyes are turned now from this buffeted smack to the struggling form of the powerful young fisherman, who is drawing on with a line the inanimate form lashed to the spar—is struggling to near the boat as those in the boat try to reach him. But the waves keep them apart. He rises and sinks with every rock of the billows, but struggles on. Now the yawl is so near that he can see her keel as she sweeps lightly on the crest of the wave; now she is lost to his view altogether.

His strength is leaving him, his struggles are more feeble, his breath all but gone. One more

effort! He sees the yawl again. A desperate and more fortunate because unencumbered swimmer is being taken on board. Once more he sinks, and when he rises again the yawl is quite near.

"Take the line," he cries, "take the line," throwing the loose end towards them.

It is caught by Hardinge, slips out of his grasp, and both the inanimate form and the brave young fisherman sink from view.

There is little light now; the men in the yawl can keep out no longer, she has shipped another sea, and they return, followed by the trembling bulk of the fishing-smack, and ready men rush madly into the sea to save precious lives—all that there are left—to save, as yet, only three. The spar with its precious burden is still seen on the waves.

Five minutes' horrible, breathless, speechless suspense, then a wild hurrah; the spar is driven ashore, and while twenty willing hands snatch its lovely occupants from death the gallant young fisherman is seen to come rolling in, is hurled high up on the sands, where he lies face downwards quite still, quite lifeless.

Foremost amongst those eager faces bending over the spar, and most eager and distressed, is Will's. Neither wind nor waves over earth or sea can shut out from the ears of those who stand round him the great heart-cry that bursts forth in the one word:

"Kate!"

Kate, the idol of his great love, it is she at last; but in life or in death who shall say?

The night grows apace, and the storm rages in unabated fury as a silent, solemn procession leaves the humble hut that forms a fisherman's home. In their midst is borne a still form with a placid, lovely face. Gently yet swiftly do they press on for Alma Villa. The admiral leads the way. Will Darian is by the side of the ambulance, silent, sorrowful, but not without hope.

The best medical assistance at hand had been sent for, and now Nixon was galloping hard on his road for a physician of some eminence, a friend of Sir Francis. He arrived within ten minutes after the silent procession had reached Alma Villa and just when the women of the admiral's household had put the unconscious patient to bed.

Sir Francis limped noiselessly into his drawing-room and beckoned Will to follow him. In the terrible excitement and distress amidst the scene of death and desolation at the fishing village there had been no time for any explanation. The admiral could see the stranger was in some way connected with the lady who had been saved from the two wrecks, and that was sufficient for him.

"You are related, sir, I presume," he said to Will, when they had seated themselves, and the admiral had told Tanner, in a whisper, lest his voice should be heard, to bring hot water and the spirit stand.

Will Darian blushed a little and turned his eyes away.

"No, Sir Francis," he said, having a few moments before caught up from Tanner the "Sir Francis," denoting the rank of his host, "I am only a friend of the family."

And then he explained how Kate Lynn had been missed and how he was in search of her.

"The Honourable George Clancy," said Sir Francis. "I know him—a sad scapgegrace—a sad dog, but it's the fault of his training. However, Mr. —"

"Darian—William Darian, Sir Francis."

"Mr. Darian, I suppose we ought to send at once for the lady's mother. She cannot be moved yet."

"You are very good and generous, Sir Francis, to open your house in this way for—"

"Tut, tut! I should like to know what's my duty if this is not? We had better telegraph at once; your servant can gallop over to the station. Will you write?"

"Perhaps you had better, Sir Francis," said Will, his natural delicacy telling him that such would be the proper course to take.

The admiral wrote out the message to be transmitted to telegraph paper, and rang the bell for Tanner.

"I presume you will not leave Sefton, Mr. Darian, while the young lady is in danger?" he asked, having ordered his faithful servant to despatch Nixon with the telegram, desiring Mrs. Lynn to take a special train at once for Sefton.

"No," said Will.

"Well, there is plenty of room here if you will—"

"Thank you very much, Sir Francis, but you will already have enough pressure on your very generous hospitality, and as a comfortable inn is near I will put up there."

"Then I'll send Tanner to engage rooms for you, Mr. Darian," said Sir Francis, pleased with the young farmer's independent spirit, and Tanner

was very soon dismissed with an order from the admiral to the innkeeper to prepare a room for a friend of Sir Francis Moonlake.

Very little conversation passed between Will Darian and the admiral now; they both in fact seemed to be listening for sounds from above. The admiral sat silent and thoughtful, abstractedly sipping a glass of grog, while Will, unable to rest, strode to and fro as restless and uneasy in body as in mind.

When Will paused in his nervous promenade he could hear, he fancied, every creak in the house ticking and every slowly drawn, subdued breath of the meditative Sir Francis Moonlake. A gentle creak on the stairs, then a steady hand, laid lightly on the door, told Will that the doctor had come at last. How rapidly he turned and faced the door—how eagerly too the admiral swung himself round in his chair and glanced inquiringly up at the doctor!

"Well?" asked Will, scarcely above a whisper.

"How fares your patient, sir?" asked the admiral.

"Her life is trembling in the uncertain balance, Sir Francis. If I shall not interrupt you I will sit down here for awhile. I shall not leave my patient to-night."

Will breathed a heavy sigh and stared moodily, absentmindedly, at the calmly spoken, unmoved professional man, who seemed to be unimpressionable, without a heart, or tender or passionate feeling.

This was Will's mental ejaculation: "What do you care which way the balance falls?" Little thinking that at that very moment the physician's very calm meditations were the result of his racking his brains for his patient's sake.

Dr. Farl sat down and helped himself to wine and biscuits; he did not smoke, he said, only occasionally, and that when he had done seeing his patients.

He chatted a little with the admiral in a quiet way upon commonplace subjects; and, seeing that any amount of conversation would have no interest for his patient's friend, he never once addressed him.

At two o'clock in the morning he went upstairs again, and came down in half an hour. The visit was repeated at half-past three, and then at short intervals until daylight, when it was reported that a special train had arrived at Sefton, and the admiral's carriage was immediately despatched.

The report was true; and the special train had brought Mrs. Lynn.

The squire had sent a letter to Will, begging him to stay and report progress through the telegraph office, as he was himself still unable to leave the house.

Nothing but the rank of her daughter's benefactor, and the awe-inspiring grandeur of the marine villa kept Mrs. Lynn from creating a scene.

Fortunately the placid little woman had full command of herself, and was led by Dr. Farl to her daughter.

A change had taken place—for better or for worse he did not say—and while he was shut up with the nurses in the sick-room with what agony did Will Darian still keep up his never-ceasing tramp on the thickly carpeted floor.

It is a dreadful time, waiting in heart-wearing suspense for the coming of the doctor to tell you whether your worst fears will be realized or the sweet life spared you for a time—the time that, alas! must come sooner or later and always dreaded. Yet why? The suffering creature in poverty and distress clinging wildly to that life, vainly hoping for better days, only to at last succumb, with hopes all shattered, the whole long life-time blighted and without any apparent purpose.

The sun had risen high in the heavens, its transient rays falling like golden threads upon the open sea, which now was bright and still, presenting to the storm-tossed mariners a carpet of blue and silver.

The birds began to twitter in the air, the solitude was broken, nature had thrown off the heavy pall of night and commenced afresh its manifold labours, but still Will Darian waited, now with throbbing temples, haggard eyes and tired limbs, but the doctor came at last.

"Well?" said Will, again, hoarsely.

Doctor Farl took him gently by the arm, led him to the window and spoke very earnestly thus:

"Mr. Darian, you are a strong man, but the strongest natures will give way under too great a pressure of mental and physical exertion; for your own sake you must at once take rest."

"Is she out of danger, doctor?"

The reply came after a moment's pause, quiet, impassioned, uttered and laconic:

"No."

(To be continued.)

ALL great languages invariably utter great things, and command them; they cannot be mimicked but by obedience; the breath of them is inspiration, be-

cause it is not only vocal but vital, and you can only learn to speak all these men spoke by becoming what these men were.

TEA IN ITALY.—It is stated in an Italian paper that the attempts made last year in Italy, without success, to grow the tea plant are being renewed in the southern districts of Sicily. It is hoped that this attempt will prove successful, as special pains have been taken to procure seeds and plants from the best sources direct from Japan. Last year's failure is attributed to the fact that the entire stock of seeds and plants had been injured by immersion in seawater through the shipwreck of the cargo.

JOSEPHINE BEAUVILLIERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lady Juliette's Secret," "The Ross of Kemdale," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

I had a dream which was not all a dream.
What are those visions which the gods
do send?

It was and was not, then my soul did seem
On fire with frenzy and I saw the end.

Carleton Pride.

JOSEPHINE's head ached, and she longed for the refreshment of the cooler evening air. It was enchanting too, the prospect of a walk with Chatteris in the shrubberies; but then she remembered that he was engaged to Miss Woodville. She had come there, it was true, delighted at the idea that she would be able to gaze upon his handsome face, listen to the tones of his voice, and treasure up the memory of his thoughts as they flowed from his lips in words terse, eloquent and manly, but she never contemplated the idea of stealthy rambles with another woman's affianced. She knew that such conduct would be wrong and dishonourable, and when she hesitated it was not with any idea of walking with Chatteris but of asking him to leave her free, in order that she might enjoy the refreshment of the air for a few moments.

"You will not refuse me this favour?" said Chatteris.

"I must, I must, Captain Chatteris," she answered. "What would be thought of my walking with you in the shrubbery? And, besides, I think it wrong myself. I cannot consent to walk with you in the shrubbery."

"You are cruel, Josephine," said Chatteris.

"Is it not you who are cruel?" she returned. She very nearly burst into sobs as she spoke, for she was much fatigued.

She looked so pale and so worn, but withal so beautiful, that her friendless condition, her youth and helplessness, all struck upon Chatteris at the same moment.

He was quite overcome, and he sank upon his knees at her feet, for in those words "Is it not you who are cruel?" she had betrayed the secret of her heart.

"Josephine! Josephine!" he cried, "I love you so that I am ready to cast all other considerations to the winds. Fly with me, Josephine, if you really love me; I can earn enough money to support us both by writing articles in magazines. My father must sell Merton Court to clear his liabilities—there will be enough left I dare say to support my mother and sisters. Why am I to tie myself to a woman the very thought of whom is dreadful and distasteful to me?"

At this moment, while Josephine, dreadfully agitated, was about to tell Chatteris that she could not for a moment think of listening to his wild appeal, the door of the room opened softly and Miss Woodville stood before the pair.

Chatteris was kneeling—Josephine was weeping.

Miss Woodville had listened at the door and had heard every word that passed between them. Her complexion was of a green and sickly hue. She smiled a deadly smile, and she advanced towards the young people.

Chatteris had started to his feet. He had flushed crimson to the very roots of his hair.

The heiress came on and stood close to him and to Josephine.

"Before I arrived at Moor Park," she said, "we met a messenger on horseback who was coming into Northwick St. John's in search of Mrs. Jenkinson, to tell her that the colonel had been taken suddenly ill and to entreat her to hasten home. As soon, therefore, as we arrived at Moor Park, she sent me home in her carriage by the cross road, a short cut. I think Colonel Jenkinson will be better in a few days, but he is a very old man, nearly eighty-three, and I fear this may be a slight paralytic seizure."

It was impossible for Chatteris or Josephine to tell from the manner of the heiress whether she had heard any portion of their conversation. It was cer-

tain that she must have seen Chatteris kneeling to Josephine.

"Well, I think," she said, turning suddenly to Josephine, "that you had better go and prepare for dinner, Miss Beauvilliers. You know your way into the oaken suite, and from there into the ante-room; and if you will ring the bell my maid will come to you and show you to your chamber."

Josephine bowed and retired in much confusion. In the ante-room, after ringing the bell, she was somewhat surprised at the appearance of a very pert and very smartly dressed lady's-maid, who, with her blue top skirt and dark underskirt, her tightly fitting bodice and coquettish cap, looked like a French shepherdess.

"Will you be kind enough to show me to my room?" said Josephine.

Nannette, for that was the name of the girl, tossed her saucy head.

"Please to walk this way," she said, shortly.

So Josephine followed her through passages and up stairs.

And a very mean little room was the room apportioned for Josephine. It was up very high. It was a narrow room, the window was narrow, and only opened with a casement that scarcely admitted air enough for a hot day. The paper on the wall was old and in many places torn off. There was only one strip of carpet by the side of the bed, the bed itself was very narrow, but the white counterpane was still more circumscribed in its dimensions. The washstand and chest of drawers were painted deal.

In short, Josephine had been apportioned one of the meanest rooms in the servants' quarter. She made no complaint, however. No remark of any kind passed her lips farther than that she thanked Nannette for showing her to the room.

Nannette tossed her head and left Miss Beauvilliers alone.

Then Josephine proceeded to change her dress. It was refreshing to be able to bathe her face and hands in cold water and to brush out her long golden hair. She put on a very plain black silk dress, which she had lately purchased, a white collar and cuffs, and found her way downstairs. Just as she was crossing the hall a great bell sounded the hour of dinner, and a footman, who came out of a passage which opened upon the hall, conducted her into a great dining-room where Miss Woodville and Chatteris were already seated at an elegant oval table drawn close to the open window.

The affianced pair seemed to be on the most amicable terms.

Miss Woodville wore a rich half-mourning dress of lavender satin and white crêpe. She also wore pearls. She was smiling amiably upon Chatteris.

It struck Josephine that he had offered apology for his strange conduct.

Miss Woodville made a slight, half-contemptuous sign with her finger, which simply implied that she wished Josephine to be seated.

Chatteris did not glance at her.

Josephine was faint for want of food, and she felt now thankful for the inhospitality that had left her starving for hours since it was no pretence but a reality that she was enabled to devote herself exclusively to the enjoyment of the soup, the roast chickens, the delicious vegetables and the dainty side dishes. In fine, poor Josephine ate with so good an appetite that when the dessert and wine were placed on the table Miss Woodville looked at her and said, with a supercilious smile:

"I should scarcely recommend strawberries and cream after you have eaten so heartily, Miss Beauvilliers. I think a slice of pineapple would be agreeable."

Josephine turned pale with mortification. How desperately strong must the spite of Miss Woodville be towards her? It must be stronger than her lady-like instincts, stronger than the rules of refinement and decorum which she, as a great lady, had learned from her cradle. Rude, coarse, vulgar, could Miss Woodville, the baronet's daughter, become on occasion—that is to say, when she was tempted by the evil passion which bore sway in her heart.

Josephine accepted the slice of pine in silence. As soon as she had eaten it she rose and begged leave to retire.

Miss Woodville drew out her watch, sparkling with diamonds, and said, with a supercilious smile:

"You may go away for two hours, but I shall want you particularly at nine o'clock in my room."

Josephine bowed her head in obedience to the mandate, and then quitted the room. She went at once to her own mean little chamber, and she put on a large straw hat and found her way out into the grounds.

The lawns and shrubberies at Stoneleigh Priory were delightful haunts. And now, under the full glow of the summer moon, the effects of the openings between the glades were picturesque and poetic to a degree.

Josephine wandered about without any set purpose or intention.

Soon she found herself in a very narrow walk of he shrubbery; the trees met overhead, the moonbeams only peeped in here and there, casting bars of silver light on the path.

All at once she heard a step behind her, and, turning round to see who was approaching, she discovered that it was Nannette, the French maid of Miss Woodville.

"Miss Woodville wants you, mademoiselle," she said, "this very moment, if you please."

Josephine accordingly walked along swiftly by the side of Nannette, who led her towards the back premises.

There was one part of the Priory overgrown with ivy and other creepers, and this portion had only three windows, which had been blocked up. Consequently it was not possible for any one to witness the approach of Nannette and Josephine across a little flower-spangled lawn, surrounded with high hedges of roses. This lawn led straight up to a very ancient Gothic door studded over with iron knobs. To the surprise of Josephine, Nannette put a key into the lock and turned it with great effort. A flight of stone stairs was then disclosed. A lamp was burning dimly. This lamp was suspended from the wall.

Nannette sprang up two or three of the steps and Josephine followed her.

"Ah! I forgot the door, mademoiselle," she said.

She sprang down again, took the key from outside, slammed to the door, locked it, and afterwards put the key in her pocket.

A sort of chill struck home to Josephine as she watched this proceeding. But she dismissed the feeling as springing from weak nerves or ridiculous fancies. She followed Nannette then up the stairs. The ascent seemed interminable. Two or three times Josephine was obliged to pause for breath.

"Where are we going?" she asked, suddenly. "There's a tower I know in the Priory. I suppose we are going to the top?"

"Mademoiselle has guessed it," replied Nannette.

Miss Woodville is up in the tower chamber."

Josephine asked no more questions, but again followed Nannette.

"On, on, on!"

"Shall we ever come to the top?" said Josephine, at last.

It was not that she minded the fatigue, but a sort of sickening dread now possessed her. There were lamps placed at intervals here and there on the walls, and just now where she stood the rays from one fell full upon the face of Nannette. It was rather a pretty face, with fair complexion and small features, but its sinister expression was absolutely terrible. Nannette was pale, her eyes, which were of a greenish gray, blazed with a peculiar light.

"Nannette," said Josephine, hastily, "where are you taking me? I seem to imagine that you are playing me some trick, Nannette. I wish you would give me the key and let me go down again into the garden."

"No, no, mademoiselle," cried Nannette, hastily, "Miss Woodville would be very angry. She is really in a hurry to see you in the tower chamber. There is some tapestry there which she desires you will repair. Pray come on, mademoiselle."

Thus urged Josephine again followed, and now after a while the ascent grew narrow, and presently Nannette paused before another door. She thrust the key into it, turned the lock, and led the way at once into the tower chamber. It was a round room, lighted only by a large dome-shaped skylight; the floor was covered with a thick scarlet felt. A table in the centre of the room was covered with a scarlet cloth. A large silver inkstand and several rolls of parchment gave the place a somewhat business aspect. Some chairs of dark wood were seated with scarlet cloth. A somewhat dimly burning lamp was suspended from a bracket in the wall. The whole chamber had somewhat of the air of a chamber of the Inquisition.

Miss Woodville sat under the lamp. This strange woman had changed her dress and wore now a closely fitting robe of black velvet. On her head she wore a Marie Stuart cap, also of black velvet, ornamented in the front by a star, formed by a large ruby and six diamonds.

Almost any other woman would have looked imposing, if not handsome, in such a dress.

But Miss Woodville's ugliness seemed to stand out only in greater relief. Her squat, her hump, her coarse complexion, all seemed more hideous than ever. She rose up and shook her finger at Nannette.

"Go out," she said. "I want you now no longer. Go out, and lock both doors after you. You know that on your discretion depends your whole fortune."

Nannette immediately obeyed.

Josephine heard her lock the door. Then for a few minutes she listened nervously to the sound of her feet in descending the steps; but the echoes grew fainter and fainter, and presently they died completely away.

All this while Josephine stood trembling in that strange chamber, so far removed from all other sympathy.

The heiress regarded her savagely. She smiled, but it was the smile one had almost said of a demon.

"Do you like this room, Miss Beauvilliers?" she inquired.

"It seems to me, madam, a little sombre," replied Josephine.

"It is a pity you do not like it," said Miss Woodville, "for you will never go out of it again alive."

Josephine uttered a low cry.

"You are not going to be murdered," continued the heiress, with a bitter smile. "On the contrary, you will be lodged here tolerably well. Your food will be given you once in twenty-four hours through a grating. You will find that that sofa opens, and forms a good bed with soft mattress and blankets. You will not be allowed a lamp at night, because you might take it into your head to burn the house. But in the day time this room is well lighted from the roof. There are books upon that shelf which you can read if you like. I am sure I hope you will find them amusing, I cannot tell, for I have never opened one of them. I daresay you will get tired—prisoners in all ages have got tired. But if you will reflect for a few moments you will perceive that you will really not have much cause for complaint. You see, you were cast upon the world without a protector, and without a home. Your father sold you to an old lady, who in turn would have sold you again to some repulsive person whom you did not wish to marry. Then in your unfriended condition, and with your fatal gift of beauty"—the heiress laughed bitterly—"you wandered forth into the world, a tempting prey for the base, the cowardly, and the rapacious of mankind.

"I have stepped in," she went on, "and have provided for you for life. You will find all your clothes in that trunk in the corner—that large box contains china ware, looking-glass, and all requisites for the toilet. You will be allowed to wash, brush your hair, and change your clothes. The provisions that are put through the grating you will be at liberty to divide into as many meals as you choose. You will not find yourself provided with many dainties, because as you will never have any exercise the simpler your food the better for your health. In the winter we shall manage somehow or other to supply you with coal. But winter is a long way off yet, and many things may happen before winter."

Josephine had listened in blank horror and amazement to this programme for her future drawn up by the cruel heiress. She glanced eagerly towards the door through which Nannette had taken her departure.

Miss Woodville waved her hand contemptuously.

"It is ridiculous to give way to false hopes," she said. "Banish the thoughts of escape from your mind. Nannette is in my confidence. She has gone away locking this door and the one which leads into the garden. She carries the keys with her. When I quit this room she will return them to me, and I shall lock them into my iron chest. There is another mode of egress for me—a door which leads to another flight of steps. These I shall descend, and then I find myself in a suite of old, disused apartments. I lock the door leading to the turret, and the key of that door I also secure in my iron chest. Once in twenty-four hours Nannette will mount the flight leading either from the disused apartments or from the garden, and she will put through the grating a pitcher of milk, a loaf, and a pitcher of water. If you were to scream until you lost the use of your voice, you could never make yourself heard from the top of this tower. Consider, then, how useless it is to fight with fate. Submit with a good grace, my dear Miss Beauvilliers. Do not repine at the inevitable. It is but loss of time."

"Madame," cried Josephine, "you have no more right to take my liberty than I have to take yours. I insist upon your letting me out at once."

And she looked all round the room, eagerly searching for a door by which she supposed the heiress would make her escape. She could not see any other door but that through which she had entered with Nannette.

The heiress watched her eyes, and then laughed cruelly.

"I have no right," she said, "to take your liberty. No—but I have the power. Might is right, my good Miss Beauvilliers. In the old mediæval times my ancestors were accustomed to get rid of anybody who stood in their way in the shortest and most summary manner. They were not so merciful as I mean

to be towards you. In those days a poisoned bowl and a dagger were the only alternatives offered for the enemies of the Woodvilles. But you will have wheaten bread to eat, milk to drink, a bed to lie on, even books to read, and no personal violence will be offered to you. You ought to be obliged to me, nay, deeply thankful, that I have not stabbed you to the heart before this. Many would have done so with far less provocation. Surely no woman ever had more reason to hate another than I have to hate you. You openly avow that you are the rightful heiress to my fortune. The man whom I love more than my life kneels at your feet and entreats you to fly with him. Nay, I grow mad when I think of all my wrongs. You cannot deny that he knelt at your feet and entreated you to fly with him."

"He was madly infatuated. He knew not what he did," cried Josephine.

Miss Woodville laughed derisively.

"If he did not know, at least I do," she cried. "I know that he has made me take the resolution that he shall never be tempted again by the presence of one so fair and so frail. Had I turned you out of the house, as I first thought of doing, he would have found means of following you, and of communicating with you again. No—you are now for ever removed from his path. Thank Heaven, this house, these doors, this tower, are mine. Nobody has the shadow of a right to intrude here. Nannette is entirely in my interests. Miss Beauvilliers, there is no escape from the fate which I have reserved for you."

As Miss Woodville spoke she approached the tapestried wall, then appeared to pass through it; and immediately Josephine heard a key grating in the lock outside, accompanied by the derisive laughter of Miss Woodville.

Josephine raised the tapestry and discovered a strong door, similar to the one by which she herself had entered, then she heard the feet of the heiress descending the stairs.

She clasped her hands and looked round her gloomy prison in despair, but while she looked the gas lamp was suddenly extinguished. Miss Woodville must have turned it off at the metre in descending the staircase.

In anguish and terror of mind impossible to portray Josephine groped her way towards the sofa on which Miss Woodville had been seated. Then she cast herself down, and uttered a loud, bitter cry.

But the sound of her voice in that gloomy, echoing chamber filled her with such cowering fear that she was obliged to hold her hands to her ears and to bury her face in the pillow of the sofa.

She feared that she might hear or see something terrible. It was but a nervous superstition, but it was sufficient to bathe her from head to foot in a cold perspiration and to cause her to tremble like an aspen leaf.

Sleep was impossible in that painful state of excitement, and the long hours of night wore away, finding the unhappy girl totally unable to obtain forgetfulness in slumber. When the gray morning looked in at the skylight a sort of drowsiness overcame her. It was not sleep, it was a species of stupor. She knew that she was a prisoner in the turret chamber at Stoneleigh Priory. She knew that she was locked away from all hope of escape, that she was in the hands of a remorseless and cruel foe.

But though she was well aware of all these facts, although she knew that she was quite alone in the turret chamber, it seemed to her that the room with its scarlet floorcloth, its tapestried walls, its old-fashioned furniture was pervaded by a certain presence, intangible, invisible, but still there. She was unable to move or to speak, it was as if she were chained down to the couch where she lay.

She could see nothing but the room and its longings, and the gray summer dawn gradually brightening threw these up by degrees in stronger relief.

Before very long a ray of sunlight seemed to quiver through the glass in the roof, and to fall like a liquid gem on the old book-case which faced it.

Then she suddenly saw standing between her and the broadening light the outline of a human figure.

She could not remove her eyes from it.

Soon the shadowy form seemed to acquire colour and substance. It was the figure of a young man, clad in a short blue coat faced with silver. He wore black velvet knee breeches and top boots; it was the hunting-dress of some thirty or five-and-thirty years before.

The man's back was turned towards Josephine, it seemed to her that he was re-arranging the books, searching for something, or rather was he not secret-

ing something?

She saw him take down a certain heavy volume

from the top shelf. He opened the dusty leaves and placed between them a strip of paper or parchment.

Then he mounted upon a chair and returned the book to its place. Afterwards he stepped down.

Josephine heard him tread heavily upon the carpet, the next moment he had utterly disappeared. There was not a trace of him to be seen.

The red sunlight was streaming warmly into the chamber, and Josephine, broad awake, sat up and wondered whether it had been a dream.

Suddenly a thought struck her, a wild, improbable thought. She remembered the tale of her grandmother Constance and the wicked young baronet, Sir Miles, how that he had set fire to the church which contained the proof of his marriage, and had hidden away the duplicate of the certificate.

She looked up at the top shelf, there was the very book that she had seen five minutes before in the hands of the phantom huntman. Josephine sprang up from the couch, mounted upon a chair, and stretched up her arms, in hopes of being able to dislodge this book of her dreams. But it was of no use, the shelf was utterly out of her reach.

Then she glanced round the room in dismay, and wondered if there were any means by which she might hope to obtain possession of the mysterious volume.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Where was she hidden? did she live or die?
Or slumbered she in some remoter shade?
Oh, when was heard her loud and bitter cry?
That bright and peerless, young and lovely maid?

Maxwell Fox.

MRS. WILCOX continued to talk about the price of cherries in London.

The unconscious farmer stirred his brandy and water and sipped it with relish.

Mrs. Childerstone's hand was upraised, and suddenly the other woman uttered a cry, a cry of fear.

"Stop!" she exclaimed.

Another moment and the murderous arm was arrested. Strong hands stopped the would-be murderer. She was dragged backwards.

In the hurry and excitement of the whole scene the good farmer started to his feet, and his glass of brandy and water was shivered to atoms on the stone floor.

Mrs. Childerstone uttered no sound, but she struggled, like one possessed with a dumb demon, in the strong hands of three policemen.

Doctor Dalby, trembling from head to foot with excitement, advanced to the fireplace, attempted to speak, but found it utterly impossible to utter a word.

Paul Clement, pale as ashes, stood opposite Mrs. Wilcox. His arms were folded across his chest, his eyes were fixed quite savagely upon the pious lady. He seemed determined that she should not escape. Yet so far he had not uttered one word, nor had he attempted to lay a finger upon that pattern of proverty.

There was yet one more uninvited guest in the good farmer's kitchen, and that was the Jewish-looking young man with aquiline nose and smooth, dark hair and moustache who had so excited the jealousy of Colonel Hastings in the country inn. It was the London detective, in short, whom poor Diana had consulted several weeks before.

Mrs. Wilcox glanced about her with a bland smile. She was ghastly pale, but she strove to look vastly amiable. What was so extraordinary in this scene was that it had transpired without a word being uttered. But now Mrs. Wilcox began, as was her wont, to preach, to protest.

"What does all this sad affair mean?" she cried. "Alas! are we never to have peace? What is the meaning of this unhappy discord—of these angry faces? Mrs. Childerstone, to you I have always awarded my friendship. But if it turns out that you are unworthy of it—alas! alas! how unhappy I shall be."

Mrs. Wilcox had settled herself comfortably into her chair as she spoke. She put on an air of primness, of severe and suspicious virtue. Yet, somehow or other, she dared not look Doctor Dalby, Paul Clement, the detective or the policemen in the face. It was into the bewildered face of the good farmer that she looked for sympathy and solace, and then it was that Doctor Dalby spoke. His voice shook terribly, he advanced to Mrs. Wilcox, stared at her, and she shrank from his piercing gaze.

"Your time has come now," he said. "Yonder woman was about to commit murder. We were watching the whole proceeding through the open doorway. She will be taken into custody, however, upon another charge—a deadlier one, one that will bring you to the gallows. You may well tremble. To-night your house has been searched, your chest broken open, your ill-gotten wealth discovered—gold and notes to the value of thirty thousand pounds—and, more than all, what you have perhaps forgotten, a certain pendant, shaped like an earring, formed of a single ruby set in gold, this came from a bracelet belonging to Diana. Colonel Hastings has seen it and

can swear to it. Woman! it is useless to deny your guilt any longer."

"I do not know what you mean," replied Mrs. Wilcox.

"You will know soon then," cried the doctor.

At this moment one of the policemen advanced and said:

"I arrest you as an accomplice in the robbery of the jewels."

And in two minutes more handcuffs were placed on the wrists of Mrs. Wilcox.

This was a strong and violent step to take, it may be said. But Doctor Dalby was exasperated desperately. He regarded Mrs. Wilcox as the murderer of his child. His influence was very great in Northwick St. John's, and the policemen were ready to do his bidding, anxious indeed to punish as severely as the law allowed the detestable hypocrite who had so long deceived the town and neighbourhood.

There was a cab waiting outside, and into this the two prisoners were forced with one policeman and Doctor Dalby. They were conducted at once to Northwick St. John's and placed there in the county prison.

It was entirely owing to the vigilance, the watchfulness and suspicions of Doctor Dalby and Paul Clement that the proceedings of Mrs. Wilcox had been watched. They had had very little proof to go upon. It had been at great risk that Doctor Dalby had applied for three warrants, one for the apprehension of Mrs. Wilcox, one for that of Mrs. Childerstone, and another search warrant for the house of Mrs. Wilcox.

Had it so happened that neither money nor jewels had been found at the house of Mrs. Wilcox the doctor would have been probably in a somewhat awkward predicament.

How it fell out that suspicion had pointed towards Mrs. Childerstone may perhaps puzzle the reader. But the fact is that the doctor had a long while before communicated with the London detective. And this person had now been in the neighbourhood for more than a fortnight. With the natural instinct of his class he had pitched upon the woman Childerstone, whom he had first seen by accident at market, as the thief who had robbed Diana of the jewels. He at once made inquiries, and was of course told that the person was most respectable, being the housekeeper and sister-in-law of a very worthy and wealthy farmer in the neighbourhood.

At first the detective was puzzled, but he did not despair. He inquired farther and then discovered that this person was said to have come up from Worcestershire, where she had rented a farm, that she was the widow of the farmer's late wife's brother, a person whom Mr. Hamer had not himself ever seen in his life until she appeared at Dighting's early in the spring. The time of her arrival tallied exactly with the loss of the jewels.

It is tolerably certain however, sharp as the detective was, that he would never have thought of implicating the saintly Mrs. Wilcox in his suspicions of the woman at the farm had it not been for the strange and instinctive dread and loathing of Doctor Dalby, who pointed out this person—well thought of, applauded, respected, nay, honoured as she was by many persons in the town, his own wife among the number—as the probable murderer of his child and robber of the jewels.

Bit by bit the whole ghastly tale unfolded itself in the eyes of the man learned in the annals of crime. He discovered the intimacy between the two women. He found out that Mrs. Wilcox pretended to have been very much attached to Mrs. Childerstone during the youth of the last-named lady, and then by direct and careful, minute and stealthy ferreting, patient, slow, but sure as it was silent, he discovered that on a certain morning a haggard, tipsy, ragged woman had met Mrs. Wilcox in a lane leading out of the town, had at once recognized her as an old acquaintance, and had appealed to her for a loan of sixpence to get breakfast, saying at the same time:

"I've somet here as will pay for a shop and a pig and a garden."

This personage had farther addressed Mrs. Wilcox as "old gal."

Mrs. Wilcox, apparently much alarmed at the recognition, had hurried the woman into a shed by the side of the road, where they had held a conference. From this they emerged, though not together, Mrs. Wilcox going homewards, and the woman wending her way by a path across the fields to a railway station, where she had taken a ticket for a town twelve miles off.

The detective by his inquiries had traced her on her return from that town, neatly dressed, with a box containing clothing, with money in her purse, clean, respectable and sober, though sulky, coarse and vulgar.

The detective had, we say, by his inquiries traced her to Dighting's farm, where she had been received

as Mrs. Hamer's sister-in-law, and she brought with her letters of introduction.

It is needless to say that these were the forgeries of Mrs. Wilcox.

Now the next duty of the detective was to go down to Worcestershire and inquire in the remote village from which Mrs. Childerstone had been supposed to arrive what had befallen the real sister-in-law of Mrs. Hamer. There he learned a strange tale.

The true Mrs. Childerstone, the widow, having disposed of the lease of her farm after the death of her husband, and having sold a few cottages which belonged to her, wrote an answer to a letter which she had received from her good brother-in-law the farmer, and directed it to be left at the post-office, Northwick St. John's, till called for, for there was no postal delivery at Dighting's farm. For this letter Mrs. Wilcox, always busy in other people's matters, had called, it must be supposed on the very morning when she first met Diana, and afterwards the woman of the barn.

Of course the amiable lady had opened the letter and read it, and very cleverly indeed had the intelligent and pious dame contrived to fasten it up again, there could be no doubt whatever about that. And it is even probable that Mrs. Wilcox would have delivered the letter, had it suited her purpose to do so, and had she not encountered the woman of the barn. But this encounter with a person whom she had known in the dark days of her own disreputable youth altered the complexion of her whole life.

Speculative and dishonest Mrs. Wilcox had always been.

She had been accustomed to open letters and to abstract money, and to steal jewellery in houses where she was not only trusted but even beloved. She had been accustomed to do these things, we repeat, for years, and never was she suspected. For she attended church so regularly, canted so well, turned up her eyes so sanctimoniously and whined so admirably that her saintly reputation grew with her years.

But now it appears that the dame was guilty of a bolder stroke of policy. She had read the letter, and the letter stated that the true Mrs. Childerstone could not avail herself of the farmer's kind offer since—though her husband had only been dead two months—she was about to marry again and sail with her new husband for Australia.

The woman seemed ashamed of her hasty marriage. Her letter was short.

Mrs. Wilcox deemed rightly that she would not be at all vexed at receiving no answer. She would only be too glad to escape censure. But here was a golden opportunity. Why should not the woman of the barn personate the true Mrs. Childerstone?

At first Mrs. Wilcox had been dreadfully annoyed at encountering this woman, who might have extorted money from her as the price of her silence regarding her antecedents, but soon she found that fortune had come to her in the shape of this ragged and tipsy creature. She at once gained an ascendency over her. She found out all about the robbery of the jewels, and as soon as her sharp eyes rested on them her shrewd judgment appraised them at their right value.

The reader can finish this part of the story for himself. He has seen the bartering between the two women for the possession of the jewels, he can imagine how Mrs. Wilcox could represent to the other that if she offered the ornaments for sale herself such an action would inevitably lead to her imprisonment, perhaps transportation. So she clothed the ragged woman, gave her money, forged a letter of introduction for her to good Farmer Hamer, finally advanced her a sum something under two hundred pounds, gained possession of the jewels, sold them abroad, and became for a time quite a rich woman.

But what about the disappearance of Diana?

It was difficult for the detective to connect this with the facts already known by him respecting the two women.

Mrs. Wilcox was a forger—that his visit to Worcestershire had proved. Mrs. Childerstone was an impostor. Mrs. Wilcox had paid her nearly two hundred pounds, the latter lady had been abroad secretly, had returned, and the search warrant (a bold step) had put him in possession of thirty thousand pounds and a pendant ruby, of which the canting dame could never have become possessed honestly. More than all this, on arriving at Dighting's farm with the intention of arresting the two women, the detective and his underlings had discovered what they did not expect to discover, namely Mrs. Childerstone in the act of attempting to murder the good farmer.

Here were robbery, forgery, villainy—quite enough crime to condemn the two women to penal servitude. But there was no proof whatever that they were the murderers of Diana, and yet both of them had

been arrested and were suspected. There seemed to have been motive enough, for the detective had understood that Diana had stated that Farmer Hamer had given her a seat in his trap when it was raining, and what more likely than that Mrs. Childerstone had been in the trap at the time—that the young girl and the woman had recognized each other—that afterwards the woman and her accomplice had planned the death of the young girl? for it was on the night following the day when she had been in the farmer's trap that poor Diana had utterly disappeared.

As yet her fate was wrapped in darkness.

The whole town and county were excited by the story of her disappearance. Every newspaper in England bore in print the name of canting Mrs. Wilcox, and meanwhile everybody looked forward with anxiety to the assizes of July, which were to take place in three weeks.

It was hoped that one or the other of the women might be brought to confess before that time. There was no chance whatever of Mrs. Wilcox; impervious she remained, and cold to all appeal. She had left off smiling and turning up her eyes, nay, she had even left off canting. She dressed very plainly and maintained silence. She read a great deal, or appeared to read, but an observer would have discovered that she seldom turned the page of the book on which her eyes were fixed. If she was questioned her answers were reserved, polite, given with precision, and without nervousness. Fearlessly she would raise her lynx eyes to the countenance of her inquisitor, and she would give answers out of which nothing could be made.

Her fellow prisoner had been taken before a magistrate the morning after their arrest, and now they were both fully committed for trial. Mrs. Childerstone on the charge of robbery with violence, Mrs. Wilcox for receiving goods knowing them to have been stolen and for disposing of them for her own benefit.

The forgery of the letters, the imposition of Mrs. Childerstone, alias Jane Ryan, which was her true name, upon the family of the too-credulous farmer—all these crimes and misdemeanours would no doubt tell heavily against Mrs. Wilcox at the trial. But whatever punishment she would get it was certain that neither her life nor that of Mrs. Childerstone stood in any degree of danger, so long as the body of Diana was not discovered. It was impossible to charge either of these women with the murder of a person who was not proved to be dead. And although everybody felt morally certain that the hands of these women were stained with crime, there seemed at present no prospect of bringing their guilt home to them.

Some attempt was made to extort a confession from the woman Ryan. For a long time she remained perfectly obdurate—deaf, obstinate, silent. Then Dr. Dalby, who haunted the prison like a spectre, whose frame was wasted, until he looked like a living skeleton, whose cadaverous face was lighted up by blazing, eager eyes—the once quiet little medical man, now the bereft father grown fierce and blood-thirsty through grief for the loss of his child—Dr. Dalby found his way into the cell of the woman Ryan, and there confronting her he promised her life, free pardon, money to a large amount, anything else she might choose to name, or desire to have, if only she would confess what she and the woman Wilcox had done with his child Diana.

"I only want her life—hers," said the ghastly doctor, trembling from head to foot in his intense excitement. "I want the life of that murderer, that sycophant who shed her crocodile's tears on my wife's breast, who ate of my bread, and preached canting sermons, while she knew that my child laid dead, slain by her hands. Now listen to me, woman. If you do not confess, you will be transported for life for that robbery in the barn, which the detective can prove that you committed—to say nothing of your intended murder of your d—d, Mr. Hamer. But if you confess, you all go free—and I will send you to Australia with three hundred pounds in your pocket. Think of that."

The woman was sitting huddled up into a heap by the side of her bed. She was looking on the floor with no more expression in her face than if she had been deaf and dumb. But now a gleam shot into her cunning eyes. She raised them and stared full at the doctor.

"If I let out, you'll put the rope round my neck all the same," she said.

"Not so, not so," cried the doctor, eagerly. "A free pardon shall be signed, sealed and delivered. I have interest with the government—more than that—the man or the woman who turns king's evidence is always pardoned."

After reflection the woman said:

"I'll tell sommat when I see the pardon sealed, and three hundred in gold before me."

There was a dogged determination about this woman Ryan which there was no gainsaying.

The doctor left the cell in a hurry.

That day week he entered it again. He had been to London—he had had an interview with the home secretary—there was the pardon sealed—there were the three hundred pounds in bag.

"Now, woman, confess, confess!" roared he.

Jane Ryan rose up from the bed on which she had been sitting. Her greedy fingers clutched at the bag of gold. She glanced at the parchment. She could not read or write, but her instincts whispered to her that no deception was intended.

There were two stout female warders in the cell—at them she looked. It was a glance full of hatred that she cast at those women. Then catching the steady gaze of the doctor, fierce, eager, and determined, she loosened her grasp of the money bag, took a step backwards, looked down upon the ground and spoke in tones which, though harsh and guttural, fell distinctly and emphatically upon the ears of her listeners.

(To be continued).

MARIO.

It was evening in Val d'Arno. The sun was sinking behind the horizon and twilight was descending upon the glorious vale. There lay the garden of Italy enclosed by mountains on either side, green and glowing in its verdant and luxuriant fertility, shaded by groves of olive and cypress, with long avenues of stately trees.

Flocks and herds grazed in the fields, vineyards flourished on the mountain declivities, and in the distance arose the summits of the wooded Apennines. The classic Arno flowed through the valley, bestowing gladness and plenty on every side, its waters rolling on in slow and most melodious motion. On every side, on the plain, on the sides of the summits of the hills, everywhere appeared the white villas of the nobles, now hidden by the thick foliage of the surrounding trees, and circled by gardens where bloomed the most gorgeous and odoriferous flowers, now standing alone and lifting up their stately marble fronts surrounded by magnificent colonnades.

In the midst of this lovely place, a queen over all around, lay Florence, the dearest and most charming city of the south—Florence, whose past glows with the brilliancy of splendid achievements in arms, art and song, whose present state captivates the soul of every traveller, and binds around him a potent spell, making him linger long in dreamy pleasure by the gentle flow of the Arno's waters.

"Here," exclaimed Byron, in a rapture, as he looked down from a neighbouring mountain upon this earthly paradise—"here—

"The Etrurian Athens claims and keeps
A softer feeling for her fairy halls.
Girt by her theatre of hills she reaps
Her corn, and wine, and oil, and plenty leaps
To laughing life from her redundant horns."

Twilight came on, and soon the moon arose, throwing a gentle glow upon the scene, and shedding around it a more bewitching influence. It was an evening fitted for pleasing meditation, such meditation as the poet loves, and for the interview of lovers. The gardens of Boboli never appeared more beautiful than now, for the solemn shadow of the groves was relieved by the soft illumination of the broad paths; the sheets of water glistened in the quiet moonbeams, and every statue and every sculptured form was invested with a new and indescribable beauty.

Upon the summit of a hill within these gardens sat a youth and maiden engaged in most earnest conversation. The maiden was exceedingly beautiful, with a face that reminded one of the Madonna of Marillo, so gentle, so tender, and so bewitchingly lovely. The youth sat at her feet upon the green turf, and with his head turned back, gazing upon her, there was disclosed a noble and most handsome countenance. His long hair, black as night, fell from his forehead, and his eyes burnt like stars in the paleness of his face. There was an expression of genius stamped upon his lofty forehead, but there were care and anxiety in its frown. The stately form of the Palazzo Pitti was near at hand, and in the distance lay the city, with the stupendous dome of the cathedral, and the lofty form of the beautiful Campanile.

"Stella," he said, in deep, musical tones, "Stella, you know all my love and the desires of my soul. All are fixed upon you. Fame and glory I wish for only as the means of obtaining you. But, oh, hard is the task and difficult is it for the unknown artist to gain the hand of the Count Borelloni's daughter. I would not grieve you by taking you without his consent, even if I were able."

"Bless you, my noble Mario, for those noble words! Do not seek to draw me from him. Willingly would I give up all—wealth and power and all—to live in

obscurity with you. But my father loves me so fondly that if I were to leave him he would die. Let us wait—and perhaps he may overcome his prejudice towards you."

"He dislikes me because I am poor and unknown. But," exclaimed Mario, with a haughty glance, "the time may come, and will come, when he will not be ashamed to acknowledge me. Art can ennoble the poor and obscure."

"I know you will become great, Mario. I know that your name will be spoken with honour, and that before long. When I first saw you here in Florence, when I afterwards heard you tell me your love as we walked by the waters of Lake Perugia, I knew that you would become famous."

"And then, if I ever gain fame and honour, all shall be laid at your feet, Stella."

"You can wait then, and seek for fame, Mario, to give you acceptance in my father's eyes. You can wait, for you know my constancy."

"I know it, and I would trust it always. I know your noble soul, Stella, its lofty qualities lead me captive, and I worship you as a divinity. Oh, Stella, you fill my soul with new conceptions of angelic beauty, and while your image dwells in my mind I look back upon it and place every feature, every expression living upon the canvas. If the picture is completed, your father's love for art will make him respect the creator of this new picco."

"And he will honour and love you."

"It must be completed in two or three months now. I seek new ideas of loveliness from you, Stella, and then my picture receives them."

"And suppose you fail, Mario?" said Stella.

"Fail? Oh, I cannot. But if I do, then will I despair? No, I will go to Rome and devote myself entirely to art. But it is late, Stella. We must go, and I will see you home before your father returns."

And the gardens of Boboli were empty.

What city is so delightful as Florence on the afternoon of a lovely day in spring, when the sun glows above from an unclouded sky, and the Arno flows on through the midst of the city, and its magnificent palaces, beneath its lovely bridges? Then beauty reigns everywhere.

The Lung' Arno, the Casino, the Via Calzolaio are thronged with carriages, with horsemen and footmen, with officers and soldiers, men, women and children.

Beautiful flower girls carry around their bouquets and bestow them on the stranger, expecting but never asking some little ducour in return. The gloomy palaces of the middle ages, the magnificent churches of early times, towers and colonnades, statues and fountains, arrest the eye and charm the beholder. All is joyousness and beauty.

Amidst the throng of carriages which rolled along the Lung' Arno and down to the Casino, none was more noticed than that of the Count Borelloni. It was a splendid equipage drawn by two fiery horses to guide which the utmost skill of the coachman was needed.

The old count was of a remarkable appearance. His countenance was noble, and his air commanding. He was noted through Florence for his wealth and taste. Artists of every kind found in him a patron. It was at his palace that Mario Fostello had first attracted attention by his genius and the beauty of his pictures; he had seen Stella, had loved her, and had spoken to the old count, telling him that he would seek fame if he would bestow his daughter upon him. But the indignation and pride of Borelloni rose high and he contemptuously ordered Mario to withdraw and never again to enter his house.

There was one feeling in the heart of the old count which far exceeded every other, and that was an intense love for his daughter. Beautiful, high-souled and accomplished, she was worthy of the highest station in the land, and such a station he desired for her.

Stella attracted the gaze of all by her exquisite beauty as she and her father were seated in the carriage, but there was one whom she saw walking swiftly past the sight of whom sent a thrill through every vein—for well she knew the tall and stately figure of Mario.

"Stella," said her father, "there goes the ambitious painter—that is the man who had the unspeakable presumption to ask your hand of me. He, a paltry artist. See him as he walks along there."

Stella's blood rushed to her face, and her frame trembled with agitation. She turned away her head to hide her confusion.

"Look, do you see him?" said her father.

"Who?" said she.

"Why, Mario, the artist, but he is out of sight. What is the matter, Stella? Tell me, my child, are you ill? Why are you so pale? You change colour. You are ill, my daughter. We must go home."

"Oh, no, father. Do not go home. It was but a passing faintness, I shall soon get over it."



[STELLA'S RESCUE.]

You are very pale, my child.'
"It is nothing, father. But look—what is the matter with the horses?"

The horses seemed fretful and impatient. They reared and kicked, they were unruly and troublesome. The coachman looked pale and anxious.

"The horses? Nothing!" said her father. "They are quiet enough. I like to have a little spirit in my animals."

Many of the passengers in the streets looked with alarm upon the animals that the count dreaded so little.

"Good day, Borelloni," exclaimed a gentleman on horseback; "a most beautiful day."

"Your servant, signor," answered the count. "It is a lovely day."

"Your horses seem vicious, they are very unruly, are they not?" said the gentleman.

"Oh, no—they are a little excited—they will presently become calm. A very great number of people are out to-day."

"Yes, a large number," replied the gentleman, looking somewhat anxiously at the horses.

After a few moments he rode away.

"Your excellency's horses are unmanageable," said the coachman, at this juncture, "or will be so soon. They are not used to these crowded streets."

The horses began to plunge and rear and snort more violently, so much so that all the people were terrified and got out of the way.

The coachman seemed unable to control them.

Mario was in the Casino, walking beneath the shadow of the trees. The cool breeze from the mountains fanned his fevered brow as he walked hurriedly along.

"I am poor, I am an artist, unknown, uncared for but by one, and that one is the noblest of her sex. I live only to gain her. When my picture is finished I shall be no longer obscure. When my fame exceeds that of the haughty count I may well demand his daughter."

Such were the thoughts that passed through his mind as he walked on.

Suddenly, far away from the Lung' Arno, sounded a loud reverberation of many voices, an immense outcry mingled with the deep rumbling of carriage wheels and the fierce neighing of horses. There were sounds like the rush of a great multitude, and cries of terror mingled with one another in appalling confusion.

Mario started and turned back. Casting his eye towards the city, he saw far away, in places where the trees did not intercept his view, numbers of men rushing to and fro.

He stood alone in the utmost perplexity, for no one was near to tell him the cause of that great uproar.

The clamour and rumbling of wheels came nearer and nearer, rattling over pavements, dashing against obstacles. It came nearer, and soon he saw a carriage, dragged on with terrific speed by two furious horses, who without driver or postilion came on unrestrained. The carriage was knocked against trees and dashed violently against stones. In it there was an old man leaning back with a pale face, expressing intense agony, and close to him clung the form of a young girl, her arms wound round him and her dishevelled hair floating in the breeze.

"Oh, Heaven! Stella!" exclaimed Mario, in unspeakable horror. "Stella! she's lost!"

With one bound he rushed in the midst of the course taken by the infuriated horses. His cloak fell from him, his hair flew about his pale and fixed countenance, and like a rock in the centre of a torrent he stood in the way of the horses.

He waved his hands wildly—he shouted to the steeds.

On they came, lessening for a moment their speed. There was a bound forward. Mario clung at the reins with the grasp of a drowning man—there was a whirl of dust, a rush of the multitude who followed

after, and then with a sound like the sudden peal of thunder burst forth the acclamation of a thousand deep-toned voices:

"Saved, saved!"

They raised Mario up—they placed him in the carriage, and bore his insensible and much-bruised form slowly to the palace of Borelloni. All Florence rang with the tidings of the dead—the name of Mario was spoken everywhere, and the city honoured the performer of so bold an action.

"Now what will Borelloni do to reward the gallant preserver of his own life and his beloved daughter?"

"He will give him a thousand piastres," said one.

"He will enrich him for life," said another.

"He will do no such thing," said a third. "Mario is no mercenary man. He despises rewards of that kind. I will tell you. He loves the count's daughter."

"Ah," said all.

"And he deserves her. But for him she would not have lived to have his love, nor would Borelloni have been living to refuse."

"Does he refuse?" said they.

"Mario said nothing to the count. It is an old story. He has loved her long. But the count, who refused him once before, will not now retract his word, even to the preserver of his life."

Mario was cared for and soon recovered. He spoke not a word about his love to Borelloni. He would not ask him now, for then he would seem to demand payment for his action, and such a thing he scorned—even though it should bestow upon him the hand of his beloved.

"I will wait," said he, "I will raise myself to an equality with her, and then Borelloni shall not refuse."

It was summer, and the sun glanced brightly gloriously, over the silver waters of the lake of Perugia. The wind blew softly over the plain, and the rich groves all covered with luxuriant foliage shaded the quiet fields beneath, which more than two thousand years before had resounded with the roar of battle. The hills encircled the plain on three sides, protecting it in winter from the cold blast and causing it to bloom with perennial verdure. The lake rippled on the shore of the other side, and stretched away, a sheet of molten silver, till it watered the bases of distant hills.

In this charming spot, which every traveller loves to view, had the Count Borelloni reared a charming summer palace. It lay on the southern shore of the lake, half way up the mountains, and from its roof a scene like one in fairyland burst upon the view. The cool winds which blew here were an alleviation to the heat of summer, and Florence, with its heat and dust, was gladly exchanged for the quiet scenes of this enchanting spot.

There was a boat upon the lake, and the enjoyment of sailing formed a chief attraction to visitors, for Borelloni's villa was always open to his friends. Yet at times there was danger attending this pleasure, for tempests would arise, and the waters would be converted into furious waves.

"How beautiful is this lovely place," said the count to his daughter, as they walked upon the terrace. "What a scene is this for a painter. See where the sun is setting over yonder—those clouds tinted with myriad tints surrounding him in glory! See above us, how intensely blue the sky, how clear the atmosphere! Look at the opposite shore—how green, how glowing in fruits and flowers—all again appearing down in the depths of this unruffled lake. Oh, Italy, my country, how beautiful thou art!"

"And, father, look at these heights around us, and on the western shore, these bold rocks with their summits all covered with spreading trees. How grandly they set off the picture!"

"If I were a painter, I know no scene that I would choose to portray rather than this."

"Since you respect and love art so highly, why did you not learn this?"

"I was too busy in my youth, Stella."

"Who of all you know is the best in his art?"

"I know a great many excellent ones—many who excel in landscape paintings, many who are good in historic pictures—but of all whom I know the one who is undoubtedly the greatest, the one who excels all others in mingled grandeur and loveliness of conception, and who approaches nearest to the grand old masters is he, the artist who saved us from death—Mario."

"Mario!"

"Yes; and if he had not been guilty of such great presumption, my palace and my esteem would have been thrown open to him always—first because he is chief of artists, and especially because he saved my darling's life."

"Yet is he so presumptuous, my father?"

"My daughter! Stella Borelloni, can an obscure man aspire to the hand of the fairest in Tuscany?"

"He may not always be obscure."

"Why do you speak thus to me, Stella? Can it be possible that you—But no, it cannot be. I will not think of it nor speak of it."

And shortly afterwards they went within.

Stella retired to her chamber, and thought of her father's words. They gave her hope. He no longer despised Mario. He could not. But he was angry at his presumption. Obscurity was Mario's greatest fault in his eyes.

"I will take courage," she thought. "Hope comes to me. Mario's greatness of genius has been confessed by my father. It will soon be confessed by the world."

Meantime Mario had become wearied of the heat of Florence. He longed for quiet and seclusion. He wished to spend the sultry summer months in some cooler and more agreeable retreat.

"By the lake of Perugia," thought he, "Stella lives. If I go there I can see her as she walks or rides about. I can feast my eyes upon her, although I am resolved to remain unseen myself. I will take my picture there, and receive that inspiration which her angelic beauty always gives me."

He came to the lake and dwelt in a small house upon its banks, scarcely half a mile away. Daily he would go to the top of a cliff close by, and when Stella walked out his eyes followed her, and she, always thinking of him, knew not that he was so near.

When she departed to ride along the borders of the lake, or sail upon its waters, he watched her, and sometimes encountered her dressed in disguise.

For two weeks he remained there, and kept his resolution of never making known his presence. But soon an occurrence took place which caused him to be discovered, yet in such a way that he rejoiced at the discovery.

It was a sultry morning, and, desirous of coolness, Stella, with a few other friends, resolved to take a sail upon the lake. There was a threatening aspect about the horizon, but it was unnoticed by those who were intent on pleasure.

Borelloni remained at home, being employed at some business.

Mario sat at his usual place on the summit of the rock, and, watching the preparations, knew their object.

An awning was placed above the boat—a high and broad awning, which could effectually keep off the hot rays of the sun.

Mario looked with anxiety upon the preparations, for he knew the signs of the weather, and feared the appearance of the sky.

All was calm, oppressively calm, and fearful to one who knew how suddenly storms arise under such circumstances. He would have warned them, but he did not dare to, for fear of discovering himself. So he was compelled to sit in a state of inaction and watch with feverish anxiety the approaching excursion.

The party left the house, they were four in number, and the heart of Mario throbbed violently as he recognized the form and features of Stella among them. They went gaily to the boat, which was now completely ready, and soon were seated beneath the awning. As there was no wind, sails were useless—so they were rowed out into the lake.

Two or three hours passed away, and still Mario sat gazing upon the boat, which was carelessly lying still in the middle of the lake. Mario watched them with anxiety, and occasionally cast a troubled glance at the sky. He would have made signals, but they were too far away to notice them.

The sky became darker, and there came a peculiar darkness and oppressiveness in the atmosphere. Still the boat moved not.

"Can they be asleep? Can the rowers be insane?" thought Mario. "The sky is clouded, and they do not notice it. Oh, Heaven—what can they do? They cannot see the sky, for the awning hides it."

His attention was now attracted by a sudden voice from Borelloni's villa. The old count appeared upon the terrace, pale and terrified, and waved his arms in the air, and screamed to those in the boat. The shout went across the water, followed immediately by the tolling of the great bell at the villa, which was now all in confusion.

Borelloni rushed about like one distracted, sending his servants after boats to go out and save his daughter.

"My daughter, my daughter," he cried, "my beautiful Stella! Oh, my daughter!"

Aud with frantic gestures he rushed down to the water's edge, and shouted to the boat, at times gazing at the angry sky above.

Those in the boat had heard his voice and seen the confusion at the villa. Instantly the rowers put out their oars and turned the boat's head towards the shore. They rowed fast, for hope was trembling and preparing to take her flight from the souls of the endangered boatmen.

The deep tones of the bell, sounding loudly and fearfully, went over the country, arousing multitudes of men, who left their fields and came to see the cause of such unwanted noise.

Mario sat on the rock till the boat turned towards the shore. Then viewing the dark sky and the occasional flash of lightning, he descended with fear to the shore of the lake. A half-hour passed, and but three miles had been passed over. One yet separated the boat from the shore. One mile—a short period of time would suffice for the passage, yet in that short time what might not happen?

But soon all suspense was over.

There gleamed a sudden flash of lightning over the whole sky, intensely, terrifically bright, followed by torrents of rain. There was a short pause, and then with a crash—a roar that sounded like the wild rage of an earthquake—burst the awful appeal of thunder, then peal on peal, roar on roar, rolled in long reverberations along the sky, round the rocky shores, and the heavens grew more intensely black! The storm had burst upon them! Down came the blast of the tempest's breath, in an overwhelming torrent of wind, and the whole surface of the lake rose in wild surges, foaming and tossing!

When the first horrible confusion had passed away all eyes were strained to see where the boat had been.

It was nowhere to be seen. Amid the gloom a few dark objects were all that could be descried in the foam of the upheaving billows.

There came a scream from the aged man who had watched the boat so intently—a despairing cry, and with his white hair streaming behind him he dashed forward to throw himself into the water. The servants seized him and prevented him.

"My daughter!" cried the old man. "Oh, my daughter! she has perished! Let me go to her!"

"Look!" exclaimed a voice, pointing to the water. "I see a dark form amid the foam. I see it, it is a man, and he swims, bearing something with him!"

All eyes turned there.

The baron revived, and again looked hopefully to the water, where the brave swimmer so gallantly breasted the waves.

But could it be his daughter?

They came nearer, nearer, and now the face was seen, and the hair, as it fell and rose above the water.

It was—it must be—yes, that long, dark hair and those lovely features belonged only to Stella!

The old man bowed down his head and wept.

Nearer, nearer, and now all fear was gone, for the bold swimmer still showed an unfailing strength and energy.

But his face was unknown. None had seen it before.

Yet Borelloni knew it—well he knew it. The same face had appeared amid the death struggle, the dust and wild prancing of maddened horses on the Casino.

And now Mario touched the land. And now he bore his senseless burden through the crowd to her father's arms.

"Oh, take her, Mario, to the house—carry her there, or else she dies."

But Mario laid her down at her father's feet, upon the grass, and voicelessly, nervelessly fell down beside her.

They carried them both to the villa. They cared for them, and soon Mario opened his eyes and asked eagerly for Stella.

"She is saved, and well. She is with her father."

"Saved? then I am happy."

He arose, and, all dripping as he was, left the house, in spite of the eagerness of the attendants.

"No," he said, "my home is near by, and why should I remain here? I will go. Leave me."

And he arose and left the house.

"Where is the saviour of my child?" asked Borelloni, on the following morning.

"Gone," answered his attendants.

"Gone? Idiots! Why did you send him away thus?"

"He would not stay, your excellency. He said his home was near by."

"Then go, I tell you, and search the country far and wide, and bring him to me."

After their departure the baron remained in deep thought for a long time.

"Strange," he muttered, "passing strange, how this painter seems to be my genius. A good genius, too—near in moments of peril. How he looked as his face rose above the waves, while he bore my daughter to the shore. Yet how can I give her to him? I cannot."

The attendants returned at evening. Their search was unsuccessful.

But one said that a tall, noble-looking man had departed in the diligence for Florence at early dawn.

"'Tis well," exclaimed Borelloni. "I fear to meet him. Better it is that he should go so."

Summer with its heat had passed away, and mild September had now come, when Florence again became delightful.

The villa was now forsaken, and the palace of Borelloni at Florence again was all joyous and thronged with people as of yore.

Again the carriage of the count rolled along the Lung' Arno, and he received the salutations of his friends.

Stella was lovely as before, but in her face there was a more pensive expression than usual, a sadness that was not customary. For she had not seen him whom she had adored—the brave youth who had twice esteemed his own life as nothing in order to snatch her from death. And what could move her father if this could not? He was more thoughtful than before, and never spoke of that scene. He had never even offered to express his gratitude to her deliverer.

Yet that evening she was again to go to the gardens of Boboli and meet her lover. Her heart bounded with joy at the anticipation of coming happiness; and the moments seemed like hours as they slowly, slowly passed away.

Again the beautiful gardens were arrayed in loveliness, and beneath the solemn shade of the lofty trees Mario again sat beside his Stella. They could hardly speak, their hearts were so full.

"And you were living so near to me by the lake and never came to me, Mario," she said, at length.

"I would not do so. It was enough for me to be near and watch you."

"But not enough for me," she cried, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, Mario! I am doubly yours, for you have twice saved me from death."

"Speak not of that," he said. "I must soon know my fate. My picture is nearly finished. In two days it will hang in yonder palace," he added, pointing to the Palazzo Pitti. "For—what do you think?—the Grand Duke has visited my studio, and told me to bring it there."

"The Grand Duke! Was he pleased with it?"

"He praised it in unmeasured terms."

"I knew so, Mario."

Blissful was the interview, and sad were the lovers to separate. But they had to depart, and soon Stella was at home.

Mario, filled with pleasing hope, looked at the beauty of the scene, and went out for a walk. He wandered towards the southern gate, and went out up a long avenue, where trees overhanging formed a long and shadowy archway. It was a still and peaceful walk at evening. He sat down at length behind the trunk of one of the trees and fell into a reverie.

Soon he was roused by the sound of approaching footsteps. He looked down the road, and saw two men stealthily approaching, armed, and conversing earnestly in low tones. They stopped not more than two yards from him and sat down. Mario could not be seen on account of his concealed position.

"Federigo," said one, "this is a bad business."

"What?" said the other, "a bad business?"

"I mean not bad, but dangerous. Now if it were only to take a few piastras, I would not care; but to kill a man, coldly, and without provocation, is rather bad."

"But we get two hundred, you know!"

"Ah, you are right. They will jingle pleasantly, will they not?"

The sound of a horse's hoofs was heard coming down the road. The men crept into concealment and were silent. Mario also preserved silence, and, clutching his stout stick more firmly, waited the issue.

"He is coming," said one, in an earnest whisper. "It is he—Borelloni."

Mario's heart leaped within his bosom at the word. He almost determined to rush upon the villains. But it would be premature, and he would be attacked. He could save the life of Borelloni more easily by waiting.

The horse drew nearer and nearer. The count was walking his horse slowly down the road. He soon came up a few yards from the spot where these men and Mario sat concealed. There he paused for a moment.

"Will he stop, or go back?" whispered one.

"No—hush!" said the other.

Borelloni came on, he came abreast of them, then one fired a pistol, and both sprang out. One seized the horse, while the other dragged the count to the ground.

"Say your prayers, old man. You must die."

"Villains!" roared a loud voice behind them, and Mario, springing out, gave one bound and felled the man to the earth. The other, frightened and surprised, stood in speechless astonishment. Mario rushed up to him and raised his arm to strike. The man fired. His pistol was knocked aside by Mario, and the next moment he lay senseless on the ground.

Mario came to Borelloni and raised him from the ground.

"Are you hurt?" he inquired.

"Good Heavens! Is it possible! You, Mario?"

"I am Mario. I thank Heaven I was here to prevent these ruffians from executing their design. Can I assist you to mount?"

He assisted the count to get on his horse again. By this time a troop of soldiers, alarmed by the pistol reports, had come to the place.

"Take those men with you," said Mario. "They have attempted the life of Count Borelloni. And accompany the count to the city. But what—you are wounded?"

"No, the bullet only grazed my head. Mario, you have saved my life. I am speechless. I feel more than I can utter now."

"Do not thank me. Thank Heaven that sent me here. Good night, my lord." And turning he was soon out of sight.

Stella sat in her chamber that night thinking upon her interview with Mario. She lost herself in conjectures about the future, so dark, so obscure, and yet it might be so bright and happy. The noise below told her of her father's arrival home, and she ran down to welcome him.

"My father! How late you are! But what?" She started back in horror at the sight of his forehead. "Are you hurt? are you wounded, father?"

"I was set upon by two ruffians, and would probably have been killed, if—"

"Attacked, wounded! Oh, Heaven! you shall not go out alone, father, you must not. You are feeble and cannot now defend yourself."

She made him sit down, and tenderly washed his wound, and stayed the blood till the doctor came. After the wound was dressed the doctor departed, and Stella spoke.

"You said you were saved, but did not tell me how, nor did you tell me his name. Do you know him?"

"Yes, I know him well, and have reason to know him."

"Who is he?"

"Mario."

"Mario again? Great Heaven!"

Two days afterwards Count Borelloni sat in his study, musing upon the strange occurrences of the few months past. His thoughts dwelt upon Mario, who thrice had been his benefactor.

"I cannot account for it. How intense, how absorbing, how wonderful must be his love for my daughter. He has treated my scorn with kindness. When I forbade him the house he never came here. I admire, I reverence so lofty a spirit!"

"Where would I be now—where would my daughter be, if Mario had not been near to save us, if he, careless of his own life, had not been our preserver?" I wondered before. Twice he had come before—a genius—a preserver of myself and child. Now he comes again and saves me. It is wonderful! I am overcome. Pride cannot resist such greatness of soul, such magnificent actions, and Stella adores him—I do not wonder at it. Shall I then refuse to make her happy? A few short years are all that remains of life to me. I wish to leave my child's happiness as her best inheritance. I can make her happy now. I can make a return to Mario for his generous actions. I can make myself happy in the contemplation of their joy. All is over. Farewell, pride. What is birth and wealth and pride when compared to the glory of such illustrious actions?"

He sat down at his desk and wrote as follows:

"Mario, you have conquered. I have treated you with scorn and indignity. You have returned it with kindness. You have saved my own life twice, and twice you have saved the life of one for whose happiness I would die a thousand deaths. Mario, I reverence your lofty spirit. I admire such noble feelings, such bravery and generosity. Come to my home. It shall henceforth be yours also. Come to my heart, which is proud to love and honour you. Come, and Stella shall be the reward which you shall receive as the best and most priceless gift of the grateful BORELLONI."

He rose from his chair and called for Stella. She came to him speedily.

"Stella," said he, "I have at last found one to whom I can confide you, who will be your protector when I am gone. What do you say to that? You change colour—you tremble."

"Oh, father, why now? Why not wait for a time? I am young. I will not—I cannot leave you."

"You need not leave me. Your husband shall stay here, you both shall cheer my old age."

"Father, I—"

"Read this, my child."

Stella glanced at it, read it hurriedly, and in a transport of joy flung her arms about her father's neck and kissed him again and again, while the tears stood in his eyes as he embraced his daughter.

"Yes, Stella, all is over. I bow before him and do him honour. This shall go to him, and he will come to receive his reward."

He gave the letter to his servant, and again sat down to receive the thanks and witness the happiness of his daughter.

An hour passed away and a messenger came from the duke bearing a letter to Count Borelloni. It was a request that in an hour he should come to the Pitti Palace.

"For," said he, "I have lately received as an accession to my paintings a picture of such rare excellence, such exquisite beauty in conception, and wonderful skill in execution, that I set no bounds to my joy in obtaining it. Knowing your passion for art, I have sent to you this notice of its reception."

The count hastened to prepare for his departure. He wondered what was the nature of the piece of which the duke had spoken so highly.

"It must be a wonderful painting," said he, "for the duke is usually sparing in his praise. It is probably one of Raffaelle or Guido. Well, I will soon see it."

Stella felt a joy which words could not utter. She recollects all that Mario had told her of his picture, and of the duke's visit, of his flattering words of commendation; and she believed at once that his picture was the one he spoke of.

The count went off, and at the expiration of the hour entered the palace. He was received by the duke. He was led through the long suite of rooms where the splendour of royal magnificence is all unnoticed amid the charms of priceless paintings, for there the Madonnas of Raffaelle tell of the boundless depths of a mother's love, and there Murillo's Madonna breathes forth virgin purity.

At length the duke stopped before a picture covered by a screen. He turned to the count, and saying: "Now, Borelloni, prepare for a surprise," drew aside the curtain which covered it.

The count started, for not among all the galleries of Italy, not among the priceless collections of Rome, had his eyes ever rested upon so wonderful, so living a picture! It was a living, a breathing form which there, drawing aside a hanging, seemed to come forth to meet the gazer. Upon the countenance there was the perfection of ideal beauty. Loveliness, angelic, heavenly, was radiant upon the face, and that face was one well known to him, for Stella stood there, but Stella—glorified and immortal.

"Wonderful! Miraculous!" burst from his lips. "It is the creation of a god. It is not the work of man! Who is he? Where is he, the genius who formed this? How could it happen that it should be Stella, my daughter? Who is the artist?"

"He is here in the next apartment," said the duke, and going to the door he spoke to some one.

He returned, leading the artist.

"This is he," said the duke. "Mario Fostello."

"Mario!" cried the count. "Mario, my preserver!" and he ran up to him and embraced him. "Mario, is all forgotten? Forgive me. But I wrong you in asking it."

The duke looked on in wonder, and could not conceal his surprise. But the count begged him to excuse his emotion.

"Would you know the cause of it?" said he.

"I am all curiosity."

The count then related all—told him of Mario's love for Stella, of his own pride, of Mario's actions. When it was ended the duke, who had displayed the greatest emotion, arose and went to Mario.

"Never," he cried, "most noble youth—never have I heard of more generosity and greatness of soul. Happy in he who can call you friend. But you shall not be neglected by me, for while I live you will always have a friend. I honour your actions, I love your noble character."

Mario was overwhelmed by mingled emotions of happiness and confusion. Joy had rushed in upon him like a torrent, and, unable to speak, he could only express by his glances the rapturous feelings of his soul.

"Heaven bless you, my lord duke!" at length he cried. "Heaven bless you, Count Borelloni! I am unworthy of such praise, but I can never forget your kindness to an obscure artist."

"An obscure artist? No, not so," answered the duke. "No longer obscure, you are the greatest in the land, and none shall dare to call you otherwise. I name you count—and in a week your title shall be formerly bestowed, so henceforth, Count Fostello, you may not be obscure."

A week afterward the palace of Borelloni was all festivity. Lights gleamed in dazzling rows within the long halls where all the flower of Tuscan nobility, and all the lords and barons and great men of other lands were assembled. For this was the day when the Count Fostello led to the altar the lovely Stella Borelloni. The Grand Duke condescended to be the head groomsman. The magnificent form and fea-

tures of the noble artist were the admiration of all, and only equalled by the beauty of his bride.

The story of his love and constancy, of his wonderful actions and splendid achievements in the realm of art, was told to all, and the city rang with his praise. All courted his friendship. All of noble nature loved him for himself, and the baser spirits were compelled to do him homage, for in him they saw the man whom the duke "delighted to honour."

A. Z.

FACETIA.

A RACY REMARK.—"The elevation of women" exclaimed my Lord Tom Noddy, as he was driving home from Ascot. "Aw—if a fella wants to see—aw—women elevated, he should see 'em at the waces—aw—after a good lunch!"—Punch.

DELICATE.

Mrs. de Shawdies: "Excuse me if I laugh, I always do when I say anything stupid."

Ponsonby (always polite): "Ahl there is nothing like being in a constant good humour."

TRROUBLES OF A FAT MAN.—F. M.:—"Now here comes the pudding. If I take any, those fellows over there will say, 'That fat fellow is never satisfied, he eats everything,' if I don't take any they'll say, 'That stout chap has eaten so much he can't take any pudding.' Confound it, I say."

*THE WORST OF IT.—*When Timson married Emily Emma he had no idea what duties might devolve on him, or that the servant girl would ever interrupt their billing and cooing with—"Oh, if you please, mis'may master come downstairs and kill them Black Beedles?"—Judy."

DISTINCTION.

New Governess: "Very good! And how long did you practise in the holidays, Maud?"

Maud: "Oh, I practised half-an-hour, Miss Bailey. But then that was by the dining-room clock, when I practised by the clock on the stairs it was three-quarters, because that's slow!"—Punch.

*A THANK-OFFERING.—*Twenty pounds for the discovery of a peer of the realm! What is a duke worth at this rate? 30*l.* perhaps; a marquis standing at 25*l.*; a viscount at 15*l.*; a baron at 10*l.*; a baronet at 5*l.*; a knight at 5*l.*; and a plain squire at 5*l.* It is a new rule for assessing humanity. But if this is the real price what extravagance was that of Sir Henry Peck's to give 2,000*l.* as a thank-offering for the baronetcy that Mr. Disraeli gave him!

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS.

Mary: "Arthur, dear, I am irresistibly reminded of that song you used to sing to me in the good old days of our courtting. What was it now?"

Arthur (grunts): "Haven't a notion, love!"

Mary: "Let me see, it used to run:

"For I am contented to bide in the shadow
So long as the sunbeams fall brightly on
thee!"

—Punch.

[Arthur doesn't see it.]

RATHER FISHY.

Head Master (sweetly): "Have you caught anything, Brown?"

Brown the Truant: "No, sir, nothing, sir."

Head Master (still more sweetly): "Well, come to my study at ten to-morrow morning, and you shall catch something!"—Punch.

The columns of a weekly contemporary contain the following advertisement:—

WANTED, a Young Man, of Christian principles, for a Chasse-monger's. He would be half in-door and half out-door. Apply, etc.

What on earth would happen to this unfortunate person when the door was shut?—Judy.

SOLVING A DIFFICULTY.

A child of some four or five summers was on a visit to his maternal grandfather, who is a wealthy landholder. One day, after making his first visit to a Sabbath school, and being duly impressed with the religious lessons taught there, he took his grandfather down on the farm to show and gather the fruit of a large walnut tree. On the way the little fellow, with the philosophy which "reads sermons in stones," said:

"Grandpa, whom do all these woods and fields belong to?"

"Whom?" said the matter-of-fact gentleman, "to me."

"No, sir," emphatically responded the child, "they belong to God."

The grandfather said nothing till they reached the richly laden tree, when he said:

"Well, my boy, whom does this tree belong to?"

This was a poser, and for a moment the boy hesitated; but, casting a longing look upon the nuts, he replied:

"Well, grandfather, the tree belongs to God, but the walnuts are ours."

*CHANGING HIS MIND!—*A wealthy man, who owns a country residence, recently became dissatisfied with

It, determined to have another, and instructed an auctioneer, famous for his descriptive powers, to advertise it in the papers for private sale, but to conceal the location, telling purchasers to apply at his office. In a few days the gentleman happened to see the advertisement, was pleased with the account of the place, showed it to his wife, and the two concluded it was just what they wanted, and that they would secure it at once. So he went to the office of the auctioneer and told him that the place he had advertised was such a one as he desired, and he would purchase it. The auctioneer burst into a laugh, and told him that that was the description of his own house, where he was then living. He read the advertisement again, pondered over the "grassy slopes," "beautiful vistas," "smooth lawn," etc., and broke out, "Is it possible! Well, make out my bill for advertising and expenses, for, by George! I wouldn't sell the place now for three times what it cost me."

CREDIT ON ACCOUNT.

The other evening as the benevolent Philanthropos was passing along one of our crowded streets he was accosted by one of our lazaroni with the request:

"Please, sir, give a poor wounded soldier a shilling. 'Tis hard to ask it, sir, but I saw by your face, sir, that I could rely upon you. There is humanity in every lineament of it, sir."

The good man was touched by this confidence in himself.

"Where were you wounded, my good fellow?" he asked.

"In the battle of the Tchernaya; had both legs shot away, sir, by a cannon ball."

"Good gracious! and how do you get along?"

"On wooden legs, sir, provided by the government; you wouldn't know 'em from real, would you, sir? Haven't had the rheumatism since I've had 'em."

"A very singular case—very singular," said Philanthropos, feeling in all his pockets; "a wonderful case; but really, my friend, I have no money unless you can change a ten pound-note."

"Can't do it, sir; but I will take the note and get change."

"So you can," said Philanthropos, half-convinced; "but—on the whole, I think I won't."

A policeman came along and it was wonderful how those wooden legs went round a corner.

THE NEW GAME OF WAR.

At the International Congress, to be held at Brussels for settling the usages of war, the British representative will be instructed to press the following points:—

1. No bombardment of London to take place while Parliament is sitting.

2. No battles to be fought on the Derby Day, the Oaks Day, or during Ascot, Goodwood, or Newmarket Races.

3. In case of invasion, Brighton, Weymouth, and Scarborough to be considered neutral territory.

4. Prisoners of war (being commissioned officers) to pay an entrance-fee to the regimental messes of which they may be elected honorary members.

5. Regimental bands captured on the field of battle to be available at festivals held at the Royal Albert Hall or at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham.

6. Portrait-models of captured generals to be permitted at Madame Tussaud's Exhibition of Wax-Works, on the understanding that (a) some site other than that of the Chamber of Horrors be selected for the display; and (b) that a ticket of admission for the season be presented to each captured general in effigy so exhibited.

7. Invading armies travelling by railway to pay at the rate of not less than 5/- a mile per person. Return-tickets (in Great Britain and Ireland) not to be guaranteed.—*Punch*.

THE TWO HEIFERS.—In Hampshire, "long time ago," lived two old fellows whom we shall call Nate and Jim. Neither of them had any "conscientious scruples," and did not mind stealing a sheep or a cow, which they always shared even. They followed this business of appropriating other people's property to their own use for some time, until at last they were caught in the act of butchering a sheep. They were arrested, imprisoned and fined; but this did not serve to cure them of it. One day Nate wanted some fresh beef; how to get it he did not know, as there had not been any butchering in the village, and to steal an animal would only send him to prison, as when anything was missed its disappearance was attributed to him. He fell into a thinking mood, and at last a grand idea struck him. His old friend Jim, he remembered, had a white-faced heifer, and he determined to make her his. He determined, besides, to make Jim assist to do the butchering, and receive half of the prize. So he walked over and held a confab with the above-mentioned gentleman, who was mightily pleased at the prospect of some fresh beef. They named a place of

rendezvous to meet that night after dark. Nate then went into the pasture where Jim kept his cattle, caught the heifer, fastened her to a tree by a rope, and painted her face red. At the appointed time he was on hand with the "critter." As soon as Jim saw her he exclaimed: "If that critter only had a white face, I would swear that it was my heifer, for she is built just like her." They butchered the animal in silence, and divided her equally between them. A short time afterwards Jim complained that he could not find his heifer. She was missing for a long time, and he finally had given her up for lost, when one day he happened to come across his share of the hide, which he examined very closely, and discovered that the face was daubed over with red paint, and knew that he had butchered his own heifer! He raved and swore at first, but his better judgment told him not to say much about it, and he kept still awaiting his chance of retaliation, and in a short time afterwards made himself even with Nate, by making him steal his own horse and get a threshing besides for laying it off on to a neighbour, before he found out his mistake.

THE HEN AND THE HONEY-BEE.

A LAZY Hen—the story goes—

Loquacious, port and self-conceited,
Espied a Bee upon a rose,

And thus the busy insect greeted:

"Say, what's the use of such as you?
(Excuse the freedom of a neighbour!)

Who gad about, and never do?

A single act of useful labour?

"I've marked you well for many a day,

In garden blooms and meadow-clover;

Now here, now there, in wanton play;

From morn to night an idle rover.

"While I discreetly bide at home,

A faithful wife, the best of mothers,

About the fields you idly roam,

Without the least regard for others.

"While I lay eggs or hatch them out

You seek the flowers most sweet and

fragrant,

And, sipping honey, stroll about,

At best a good-for-nothing vagrant!"

"Nay," said the Bee, "you do me

wrong,

I'm useful too; perhaps you doubt

it,

Because—though toiling all day long—

I score to make a fuss about it!

"While you, with every egg that cheers

Your daily task, must stop and ham-

mer.

The news in other people's ears,

'Till they are deafened with the clamour!

"Come now with me and see my hive,

And note how folks may work in

quiet;

To useful arts much more alive

Than you withall your cackling riot!"

L'ENVOL.

The Poet, one may plainly see

Who reads this fable at his leisure,

Is represented by the Bee,

Who joins utility to pleasure;

While in this self-conceited Hen

We note the Poet's silly neighbour

Who thinks the noisy "working-

men"

Are doing all the useful labour!

J. G. S.

GEMS.

WORK.—The man who has nothing to do is the most miserable of beings. No matter how much wealth a man possesses, he can neither be contented nor happy without occupation. We were born to labour, and the world is our vineyard. We can find a field for usefulness almost anywhere. In occupation we forget our cares, our worldly trials and our sorrows. It keeps us from constantly worrying and brooding over what is inevitable. If we have enough for ourselves we can labour for the good of others, and such a task is one of the most delightful duties a worthy and good man can engage in.

SUCCESS.—If your seat is too hard to sit upon stand up. If a rock rises up before you, roll it away, or climb over it. If you wish for confidence, prove others worthy of it. It takes longer to skin an elephant than a mouse, but the skin is worth something. Don't be content with doing what another has done—surpass it. Deserve success, and it will

come. The boy was not born a man. The sun does not rise like a rocket, or go down like a bullet fired from gun; slowly but surely it makes its round, and never tires. It is as easy to be a leader as a wheel horse; if the job be long, the pay will be greater; if the task be hard, the more competent you must be to do it.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PHOSPHORUS AS A CURE FOR CATARACT.—Dr. Combas gives a case of a girl, aged 24, of nervous-lymphatic temperament, suffering from capsulo-lenticular cataract, hardly able to discern light from darkness; suffered frequent headaches. Two or three drops of phosphorized oil were dropped into the eye daily, and frictions of the same used over the forehead. After four months of this treatment, which was used perseveringly, the eye improved, colours could be distinguished, and the opacity of the lens so far diminished that it could not be discerned at a distance of two or three paces.

ANTIDOTE TO POISONING.—The experiments made by Professor Binz, of Bonn, with reference to the effect of alcohol on animals, are regarded as of much importance inasmuch as he seems to have discovered the reasons why alcoholic stimulants are so useful in cases of snake poisoning. He found that when decomposed blood was introduced into the veins of the living animal all the symptoms of putrid fever were shown, the temperature increasing until death ensued. Alcohol, it is stated, reduced the heat and retarded the putrid process, increasing the action of the heart—precisely the effect of alcoholic stimulants, it is said, when administered in case of rattlesnake poisoning.

STATISTICS.

GOLD OF VICTORIA.—The gold mining industry of the colony of Victoria was not so prosperous in the year 1873 as it had been in 1872. The average number of miners employed fell to 52,544. The number has been decreasing constantly for the last eight years; in 1866 it was 73,479. The decrease is in a great measure owing to the largely increased use of machinery, and also to the fact that many of the diggers who were mining by themselves in old workings, and earning only a bare subsistence, have either selected land and are cultivating it or else have betaken themselves to some other more lucrative pursuits. The quantity of gold produced in Victoria in the eight years has been as follows:—In 1866 it was 1,536,581 oz.; in 1867, 1,493,831 oz.; in 1868, 1,474,187 oz.; in 1869, 1,367,903 oz.; in 1870, 1,281,841 oz.; in 1871, 1,303,379 oz.; in 1872, 1,317,102 oz.; in 1873, 1,249,407 oz. The total is 11,024,231 oz., equal to 44,096,924/-, calculating the value at 4/- an ounce.

MISCELLANEOUS.

WILD coffee trees have been discovered growing in California.

THE Bishop of London has admitted two ladies to the office of deacons.

LETTERS of half an ounce may be sent from the United States to France for 9 cents.

THE policy of the Russian government is to compel all its subjects to worship under the forms of the Greek Church, otherwise to leave the country.

It is stated that Prince Leopold is to go through the course of studies which qualifies for admission to the English bar.

THE Emperor of Austria has directed a sum of 6,000 florins to be expended in the erection of a monument to Beethoven at Vienna, in the garden opposite the Gymnasium.

A MONSTER lobster, measuring 14 inches round the body, 35 inches from tail to feelers, and 10 inches round each claw, and weighing 10 lbs., has been caught off Bongor, and forwarded to the Brighton Aquarium.

At the exhibition at Paris of the products of the French colonies there will be displayed an enormous golden nugget, which has arrived from Cayenne. It weighs 200 kilogrammes, and is of the value of 600,000 francs.

THE marble statue of Shakespeare executed by Signor Bruciani according to the instructions of Mr. Albert Grant, M.P., has been placed on its pedestal, in the centre of Leicester Square. The statue is nearly nine feet high, and weighs several tons.

THE Ship Hotel, Charing Cross, has been sold by auction, comprising a portion of the hotel with adjoining property in Spring Gardens, the whole occupying a site of 3,250 feet. The first bid was 15,000/-, and, after a sharp competition, it was knocked down to Messrs. Drummond at 30,000/-, being nearly 10/- per superficial foot, and more than 40,000/- per acre.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. S. H. (Woolwich).—Your letter was received in due course.

MINNIE.—We do not undertake to return rejected communications.

JOHN D.—It is against our rule to send through the post-office replies to correspondents.

DANIEL M.—The great orator and statesman, Henry Grattan, was born in Dublin in 1750 and died in London in 1820. His body was buried in Westminster Abbey.

E. H.—Certificates of marriages solemnized upwards of a hundred years ago can only be had of the clerk of the church where the marriage took place.

MARIAH W.—The English grave accent is made from left to right, and is used to direct the speaker to depress the voice. The syllable over which it is placed should be pronounced in a low, deep tone.

BOURNEMOUTH.—The handwriting is not sufficiently compact; the distance between the words is often too great and irregular. You should purchase a copy book with the copy set at the top of the page, and then write a page every day.

A SMOKER.—When the top of the bowl of a meerschaum pipe is burned in the manner you describe connoisseurs are of opinion that any aesthetic beauty attaching to the pipe has vanished. The marks of such burns, we understand, cannot be obliterated.

J. R. C.—When seized with the cramp while bathing a resolute effort must be made, and the leg must be forcibly and suddenly stretched out. The leg should be immediately thrust out of the water into the air. You should not bathe when the stomach is full. Just before breakfast, dinner, or supper are seasonable opportunities.

THE SEA KING.—A marriage solemnized between a Protestant gentleman and lady in a Roman Catholic chapel would be legal, provided the chapel is duly licensed for the solemnization of marriages; but it is still a question whether a Roman Catholic priest would permit such a marriage.

FLORENCE M.—It is very unusual, though not impossible, for unmarried ladies under twenty-one to be in possession of large sums of money. The will or settlement under which they take generally directs the money to be paid to them on their marriage or upon their attaining twenty-one, whichever event shall first happen.

JANET.—The palace of which you were thinking is probably that situated in Jeddah and belonging to the Emperor of Japan. The pillars which support the hall of audience are reported to be made of solid gold. There are also in connection with the building three very high towers, each of which is said to be covered with gold plates.

H. N.—Take a map of London and find in it the situation of St. Paul's Cathedral. The locality of which you are in search is a little to the south of that building. The fee for the perusal of the document is one shilling; the cost of an office copy varies according to the length required. Your handwriting, though legible, is not good.

J. J. (Pimlico).—A marriage contracted in a name which has been adopted by its possessor for ten years is legal. The children of the union should take their father's name as it is written in the registrar's book wherein the marriage is certified. We assume that no other question arises beyond the adoption of a new name, and that, as we have intimated, is immaterial.

ANTHONY S.—It is, we believe, possible for those skilled in the art to transfer a painting in fresco from the wall to canvas. Leyland's painting of the Triumph of Clastus—Cupid bound by a troop of young maidens—is an example of this sort of thing. This picture formed a part of the famous Barker collection, and was recently sold for £400.

OMEGA.—We are not aware of any remedy for sea-sickness. It is incident to the peculiar motion of the vessel acting upon some noxious state of the system and censes when a better state of health supervenes. People with a sound digestive apparatus do not suffer from sea-sickness. Ordinary coughs and colds are cured by the application of warmth to the body both externally and internally. Sometimes a mild aperient pill will aid the cure.

A SCHOOL GIRL.—We are afraid there is no remedy for either of the supposed grievances with which you are, unfortunately, discontented. We are not acquainted with any means by which the undergrowth of hair can safely be eradicated, nor can the natural compass of the voice be extended beyond such as it may be able to reach by the aid of careful practice under proper professional supervision.

A CONSTANT READER.—A ship steward's situation may be heard of at the office of owners and charterers of vessels, and sometimes at places frequented by captains and mates. As in most callings, something in the way

of personal influence or introduction is necessary to secure the appointment. There is no hard-and-fast line as to age, but a person seeking a steward's place should be active. The wages as far as money payments are concerned, are small, because the supply of rations and similar matters is taken into account.

ANY B.—A young gentleman should not offer to shake hands with a lady upon his first introduction to her, neither should he raise his hat when he meets that lady in the street unless the lady previously acknowledges him. There must be something more than a mere introduction to warrant cordiality, which only ensures when both the parties discover it will be agreeable. 2. Perhaps the better way will be to continue to purchase through the agent.

KATHLEEN L.—The handwriting is fairly good, good enough for all practical purposes. All the remaining questions come under the same category and are alike answered by enjoining you to keep what is termed "a good habit of body." This means, regulate your exercise, your diet, and whatever medicine you may require, in a manner suitable to your constitution. If experience or the homely advice of friends has not already taught you to do this you should consult a physician without delay.

PATENT.—You should employ an agent. Patent-agents are a recognised class of professional men, their addresses are given in the directories published in large towns, and from their reputation in the neighbourhood you can form some judgment of their respectability, and thus be able to make your selection. The cost of a patent varies considerably and depends upon such circumstances as the length of the specifications, the number of the drawings and the time for which it is desired to protect the invention.

"WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO."

All through the moonlit way we loitered,
Annette and I, with spirits light,
As from a schoolmate's joyous wedding
I saw her home one fair June night;
But sweetest moments are the fleetest,
And all too soon, that brief walk o'er,
Within a porch of blossoming roses
We lingered at her cottage door.

I knew 'twas late, and yet I tarried;
"Twas hard to tear myself away;
For, though her lips "good night" had
whispered,

Somehow, her eyes still bade me stay.
Her hand in mine was shyly nestled,
I slipped an arm beneath her shawl,
And on each dimpled cheek I kissed her—

The maid I loved the best of all.

How timidly I asked my darling
To name for me the happy day,
When, from another merry wedding,
I too might lead a bride away!
I wondered I had dared to ask her
Until, in accents sweet and low,
Came from her lips the old, new story,
"Where'er thou goest, I will go."

That dear old porch, with all its roses,
Has long since fallen to decay;
And we, who lingered in its shadow
Together, have grown old and gray.
The joys of earth how frail and fleeting!
But in that home beyond the skies
We know that we shall love for ever,
For true love never, never dies!

L. S. U.

POLLY PRIMROSE.—Love's ferret is the sort of thing you require. It is the name of a keen-eyed, restless little creature not altogether unknown to the student of a certain branch of zoology. Despite, however, the eagerness of the animal its instinct always quickly discovers if the opening it seeks for exists not; and then the restlessness is replaced by repose for a time, that is, until it is placed on a new scent. Restless by nature it must still have a well-defined scent ere it starts on the chase; if unsuccessful it fattens on its prey, if often disappointed or foiled, or kept long without any tangible opportunity, the creature will not again be tempted from his hole, but will pine and die.

AN INJURED ONE.—Your cause of vexation appears to be remarkably slight. You should not be over sensitive on account of your accident, for there are well-known cases of men with just double your calamity having found favour with ladies of youth and beauty, when as a consequence marriage ensued. The real misfortune in your case seems to be the unhappy doubt that has, needlessly, arisen in your mind. For this reason alone, if we must advise, we should say give the matter up, because doubt and love cannot walk hand-in-hand with comfort. Escape while you can from the misery of him "who dotes yet doubts, suspects but strongly loves."

A STUDENT.—Observers of the physical development of the human body are of opinion that precocity in this direction is indicative of premature decay, and record the fact that most of the individuals whose powers have been great at a comparatively early age have failed to attain the ordinary term of manhood. The case of the boy who at four years of age was able to toss an ordinary bundle of hay into the racks of the horses in stables is well authenticated. The boy was exhibited before the Paris Academy of Sciences in 1729. He then measured 4ft. 5in., although he was only seven years of age. It was then stated that at two years of age he began to exhibit signs of pubescence which soon afterwards were completely developed, and at six years of age he could lift as much as an ordinary sturdy fellow of twenty. But intellectually he did not make the same progress. His understanding was no greater than is usual with children of his age, and he found his chief amusement in the same description of playthings and toys used by them.

BLUE-EYED LIZZIE.—1. The latest fashion in ladies' hair-dressing is that, we believe, set by the Duchess of Edinburgh, and consists of a series of small puffs or curls on the top and back of the head out of which emerge two long and thickish ringlets which fall gracefully between the shoulders. 2. When a lady accepts a ring from a gentleman who is not a relation it is generally considered that by such an acceptance she gives a tacit acquiescence

to some sort of love engagement existing between them. She, therefore, should not accept if she is already engaged or if she has no particular regard for the gentleman who would make her such a present. Old friends of the family might under the circumstances be privileged, and special occasions, such as farewells and some birthdays, would form an exception to the rule. 3. Young people who are engaged to be married should not do anything to vex each other; if this rule is observed it will prevent either of them walking out with a companion who is under of these circumstances unavoidable. 4. High-heeled slippers are now the fashion. 5. Your writing is tolerably good, although the appendage placed by way of flourish to those letters which have tails is eccentric and confusing.

M., twenty, a French gentleman, with a good position and education, wished to meet with a pretty and loving young lady about eighteen.

ELSIE, eighteen, dark, brown eyes and light hair, wishes to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-four, who is good looking, fair, and has good prospects.

LOVING NELL, twenty-two, medium height, brown hair, hazel eyes, good tempered, and domesticated, desires to correspond with a gentleman respectably connected, affectionate, and fond of home.

ADA, tall, fair, considered handsome, golden hair, blue eyes, a good pianist and singer, and has £80. per annum, would like to marry a tall, dark, and nice-looking gentleman who is fond of music and dancing.

MARIA, twenty-one, medium height, dark-brown hair, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-five, tall, dark, loving, and fond of home and home comforts.

NELLIE T. would like to become acquainted with a young man with a view to matrimony. She is eighteen, not tall, brown hair, fair complexion, poor but well educated, and would make a good man happy.

A FAIR ROSA, between seventeen and eighteen, medium height, and considered pretty, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about nineteen. She will have an income.

GRITTY D., twenty, medium height, brown eyes, considered good looking, and would make a loving wife, would like to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman about twenty-four, and able to keep a wife.

ANNIE, thirty-four, average height, a widow, loving disposition, and domesticated, would like to correspond with a gentleman, with a view to marriage, between thirty-eight and forty-eight. He must have an income of not less than £100. a year, be well connected, affectionate disposition, fond of home, and steady; a widow not objected to.

GALLANT TOM, twenty-four, black hair, bushy whiskers, dark complexion, considered good looking by his men and shipmates, has been abroad of late, and is now about to leave. Her Majesty's service and settle down, has a little money, and would like to share it with a mate. Respondent should be about twenty, good looking, affectionate, domesticated, and able to make a happy home and pleasant.

LOVING HEART, twenty-three, 5ft. 3in., good figure, golden-brown hair, dark-brown eyes, eyebrows, and eyelashes, and good tempered, would like to correspond with a steady, respectable man about her own age and height. He must be fond of home comforts, for "Loving Heart" is a thorough good manager of domestic duties. He must be able to keep a comfortable home (not showy); a mechanic or business man would suit.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

TYRA BERENICK is responded to by—"J. K.," who will find in him all that she wants.

J. A. by—"Polly Primrose," thirty, a widow, tolerably good looking, and has money.

BOWMAN OF THE DANCING BEAUTY by—"J. G.," twenty, medium height, rather dark, not bad looking, fond of home, and domesticated.

HEAD BOWLINE by—"Nellie," twenty-three, medium height, dark, good tempered, loving, thoroughly domesticated, and fond of home; and by—"Annie," seventeen, dark eyes and complexion, domesticated, and fond of home.

ROBERT P. by—"Eliza G.," twenty, medium height, dark, loving, and domesticated; and by—"Dark-Eyed Beauty," twenty-three, medium height, dark, good looking, loving, fond of home, domesticated, and thinks she is all that he requires.

DICK STARLIGHT by—"Beautiful Star," twenty-two, tall, dark, domesticated, loving, fond of music, and thinks she would make a good wife; by—"Fannie," twenty-six, 5ft. 4in., dark eyes and hair, and has a good business; and by—"Bessie," twenty-six, dark, good looking, merry, loving, and thoroughly domesticated.

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London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by G. A. SMITH.